WOMEN, WORK AND FAMILY:
THE CASE OF THE GARMENT WORKERS IN MERIDA, YUCATAN

By

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TO MAURICIO AND ARIADNA:

FOR THEIR GOOD FEELINGS,
THEIR KINDNESS,
THEIR CONCERN FOR OTHERS
AND THEIR CONSCIOUS CONTRIBUTION
TOWARD CONSTRUCTING A BETTER WORLD.

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By

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In 1985-86 I made surveys of garment workers in Merida, Yucatan (Mexico). Two different kind of workers were employed in this economic branch: domiciliary piece-workers and regular factory employees. Minimum legal wages and fringe benefits were reserved for factory workers.

During the field work I became interested on the mechanism of women's labor segregation into either home-based or factory labor. If there were different segments of women regarding their types of jobs in a segregated female labor market, women were also heterogeneous with respect to their domestic domains and their own identities. The reasons for labor market incorporation were different for daughters, sisters, wives, wives and mothers and household heads. Hence, the analysis of the groups of workers was constructed along two different lines: one was based on women's mode of incorporation into wage labor (as home-based or as factory

workers). The other was made subdividing these two original groups according to worker's life courses.

A sub-sample of home-based and factory garment workers was re-interviewed in 1991-92. These interviews made clear that for "wives and mothers" and "household heads" the symbolic meaning of paid work was essentially a contribution to the family well-being. For young single women ("daughters" and "sisters") the need of having "... money for themselves..." was overwhelmed by the desire to get married and have children. Furthermore, after getting married they usually dropped out of the labor force.

However, changes in these patterns were emerging. The interviewed women recurrently said that "... if economically necessary..." women should work. Based on women's families' well-being, "wives and mothers" were viewed and viewed themselves as potential workers. On the other hand, several young single women wanting to get married had consciously postponed this goal to build a career for themselves, although attached to the desire of giving their children a better life. Thus, aside for a few household heads, Yucatecan women were not "renegotiating" their marital contracts, as elsewhere.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The fact that the labor market is segregated by gender, and that women are in a disadvantageous situation in comparison to men, has been well discussed and documented (Armstrong, 1982; Beechey, 1987; West, 1982). Women tend to occupy positions socially assumed and accepted as "feminine," mostly related with the domestic domain. Thus, worldwide, in the tertiary sector they are predominantly cooks, teachers, maids, janitors, nurses, child care workers, etc. In the secondary sector they are found mainly processing food and manufacturing garments. When self-employed, they are primarily seamstresses, petty commodity producers and vendors (food, handicrafts) and so on. All these activities are characterized by low wages, job insecurity and few opportunities for skilled training or promotion. Women are also a huge proportion of the unemployed.

Theoretical efforts have been developed to explain the allocation of different types of work to men and women, blacks and whites, people with different religions, and ethnic origins. It is unquestionable that laborers with particular features occupy the worst positions in different social formations (women, blacks, immigrants, for example), through a process known as labor segregation.

The most generally accepted explanation for labor segregation is the dual labor market theory. In this theory the labor market is composed of two distinct

sectors with little mobility between them for their respective workers. Primary sector jobs require skilled laborers since the jobs are relatively secure and well paid with good chances for promotion. The secondary sector is characterized by hiring unskilled or semi-skilled workers; by contrast, these jobs are characterized by labor insecurity. These laborers are trapped in the same repetitive and intensive activities with little chance of being promoted or becoming skilled and wages are low (Armstrong, 1982).

However, the dual labor market explanation is too simplistic. From this point of view, the collective production and distribution of goods and services generate the need for workers with particular profiles for specific tasks; some skilled and the others semi- or unskilled. Then, according to the education and degree of expertise of each individual, he/she is placed in the primary or the secondary sector.

The dual labor market theory recognizes that there are vulnerable sectors of labor force, but neglects the fact that their vulnerability is due to their particular way of insertion into the overall capitalist society. Women's vulnerability in the labor market relies very much on the socially accepted sexual division of labor and its symbolization. Thus, women are viewed as "naturally" made to be in charge of domestic chores and child rearing activities. With the expansion of capitalism and the intensification of cash economies, they are also assumed to be economically dependant on men's earnings (fathers or husbands) (Dierckxsens, 1978).

Economic development, the crisis and structural adjustment policies faced by third world countries during the eighties are pushing more and more women into the labor market (Benería, 1992; Chant, 1994a; Safa and Antrobus, 1992). Currently, even married women with children get into and stay in, the labor force (Chant, 1994a;

García and de Oliveira, 1993) and the number of female headed households is growing (Safa, 1990 and forthcoming); but still women face labor segregation.

Furthermore, their earnings continue to be seen as "pin money" and they are perceived as temporary workers who will drop out of the labor force as soon as they get married and have children, even when, for many women, this is no longer true (Safa, 1990 and forthcoming). They are also assumed to be a weak but patient and obedient labor force, capable of doing repetitive and monotonous jobs. All these attitudes are socially constructed and woven into women's own identity.

Thus, the high rates at which for the past twenty years women have entered into the global labor force, have not kept them from being trapped by labor market segregation. Diverse studies (Benería and Roldán, 1987; Chant, 1994a; Safa, forthcoming and Safa and Antrobus, 1992) show that during these two decades, female identity has changed and they now consider themselves also as paid laborers, not only real or potential housewives. However, few changes have been documented about their responsibilities with child rearing and domestic chores. Some studies have detected a renegotiation of the marital contract, with women gaining more authority when they are paid workers (Roldán, 1988; Safa, 1990). Almost all married women and household heads face a double day if they engage in waged labor and many working daughters "help" their mothers with household tasks, while their brothers do not. While the "male as breadwinner" is becoming a myth (Safa, forthcoming), women as responsible housewives and caring mothers are still a reality in most countries. If needed women share with other women domestic tasks or child care activities, but men very seldom participate in them (Chant, 1994a:24).

Thus, employers take advantage of women's vulnerability due to their identity as housewives to place them in labor intensive activities, lower their working conditions to the minimum to save expenses in variable capital and to augment profit margins. Furthermore, industrial enterprises (particularly electronics and garment production) since the 60's have been installed even outside the borders of their countries of origin. This strategy was implemented to search for the cheapest labor worldwide, finding the most vulnerable female segments of the labor force (Safa, 1981).

Hence, the dual labor market theory does not provide an explanation, among other issues, for why:

a) "women tend to be excluded from work which is formally recognized as skilled, (although) they are nevertheless to be found performing work which is skilled in a real sense" (Armstrong, 1982:32). Ergo, as Beechey (1987:14) argues "gender affects the organization of work . . . in the definition of skill and the distinction between skilled/nonskilled work."

b) gender defines jobs as either women's or men's (Beechey, 1987:14) and women's are sub-valorized.

c) "gender influences women's and men's hours of work and their views about the . . . organisation of working time" (Beechey 1987:14, points out that women are part-time workers more often than are men).

d) women are recognized for having patience and "nimble fingers" (Elson and Pearson, 1981), but these features are not compensated with job stability, higher payments or both, as are men's jobs where strength is needed.

e) "women . . . put the needs of their husbands and children first, before their own needs for autonomy and economic independence . . . (and) . . . can, for instance, be recruited into jobs paying (only) a 'supplementary wage' (West, 1982:3), although essential to the maintenance of a household's living standards.

So, low salaries, job insecurity and a lack of opportunities for promotion and skill training, characterize the female labor market, mainly because women are socially vulnerable. Their vulnerability makes "women workers . . . a highly flexible as well as cheap source of labor in advanced capitalism" (West, 1982:2).

Because of the above, as Beechey says (1987:11) "I reject the 'dual system' approach, favouring instead an approach which links the spheres of production and reproduction and analyses the way in which gender (and other forms of discrimination) is constructed in both."

Segregation within the Female Labor Market

However, women are far from being a homogeneous group; this is true also for the female labor force. Segments of working women differ from each other regarding wages, fringe benefits, working conditions, domestic spheres, etc. Thus, there are processes of segregation of sectors of women into the best or the worst jobs within the female labor market.

But, although the sexual division by gender in the labor force has been extensively researched, along with the sexual division of labor in the household, less attention has been paid to the interplay of the two arenas (Villarreal, 1990) and even

less to its impact on the mechanisms of labor segregation in predominantly female activities in the labor market.

That is, the specific processes of creation of diverse segments of female workers, its causes and consequences, have been neglected. In women's studies more primary information is needed to establish the interactions and relationships between the labor market and the domestic domain, which I hypothesize, has an enormous importance for female segregation.

In the process of segregation of the female labor market, labor supply and demand interact to place women with certain socio-demographic characteristics in unique tasks. For example, a "feminine" labor market existed for a long time in Mexico's northern border *maquiladoras* and women tended to be young, educated and single because only women that fulfill this profile were hired (Fernández-Kelly, 1983).[1] They usually got at least the minimum legal wage, were legally hired and had all the fringe benefits the law established. Thus, this segment of "privileged" workers (relative to the situation of others in the nation) was constituted by labor demand. Of course, the necessary supply of workers with the chosen characteristics had to be on-going, if the demand is to continue.[2]

Now, from the perspective of labor supply (and especially regarding women), their personal, cultural and social identity and their household dynamics (García *et al.,* 1982) are woven in their search or acceptance of certain types of labor.

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[1]*Maquiladoras* are now employing men. It has been estimated that they constitute 35% of its labor force (Chant, 1994a:27).

[2]Although this panorama, as a major trend, is changing and currently many more *maquiladora* workers are hired as temporary workers with no fringe benefits.

In 1985-86 I made surveys of garment workers in Mérida, Yucatán. During the field work I got interested in the issue of women's labor segregation within the local garment industry. According to entrepreneurs and managers, whom I also interviewed, garment factories in Yucatán are in continuous need of labor supply because they deal with a highly unstable labor force. Thus, they cannot afford to hire only women with specific characteristics. This statement seems to be true because a) on an every-day basis a lot of newspaper ads appear asking for workers in garment factories and home-based labor, b) in my sample, factory workers have very different levels of education (from illiterate to well-trained women such as secretaries) and marital statuses and c) workers themselves told me that they continuously look for better working conditions, so they shift jobs a lot.[3]

If this is the case, women's segregation within garment manufacturing would be determined mostly by labor supply, rather than demand. On the other hand, the data gathered suggests that there is strong labor segregation in apparel manufacturing. Fringe benefits and better earnings are given more frequently in large factories. The working conditions and the wages worsen while going down in factory size to medium, small and micro-enterprises; these conditions get even worst in illegal sweatshops and are the worst in home-based labor.

On the other hand, the socio-demographic characteristics of the labor force involved in factories by size and home-based labor also varies. For instance, young, single women, are more likely to work at the factories. In Yucatan married women with children were also involved in factory labor at high rates. Better wages and

[3]Garment workers rarely confronted their employers for better wages or changes in their working conditions. However, they easily shifted factories if they felt mistreated or disliked their jobs.

fringe benefits are reserved for women that can be absent from their homes on a daily basis. Safa (1990) has pointed out that young, single working women are less disruptive of the traditional authority pattern in the family because as daughters, they do not challenge the male role of economic provider, as a wife may. But in Merida married women working as factory laborers identify primarily as housewives and their salaries are usually lower than their husbands'.

As elsewhere, home-based workers in Yucatán are middle-aged women, married and with children, living with no other relatives but the members of their nuclear family (Abreu and Sorj, 1993; Mies, 1981; Peña and Gamboa, 1989; Ypeij, 1993). Therefore, home-based labor is mainly performed by married women with a family in expansion. These women cannot leave their homes for factory jobs because they are in charge of domestic chores and child rearing responsibilities. They may live a more constrained household economic situation because of child rearing and education costs and the lack of other household members who can reach the labor force. However, at the same time home-based laborers get the worst wages and working conditions. In my sample home-based workers' *per capita* income was consistently lower than that of factory employees.

Safa (1980) has suggested that married women are a secondary labor force within the women's sector. They are less preferred by employers, due to absenteeism and other issues related to their maternal role. Thus, not only are married women less likely to work (although urbanization and the economic recession is changing this), but they are less in demand than young, single women. However, because home-based labor appears to be "compatible" with domestic chores, this statement

does not apply to laborers and employers of domiciliary piece-workers. Home-based workers worldwide appear to be predominantly married women with children.[4]

Women heads of household are reported to be one of the most vulnerable groups in the labor market and closely related to this, one of the poorest sectors in the overall society (Merrick and Schmink, 1983). In my sample, female heads of households were found in both factory and home-based labor, although women heads in factories almost double the percentage of the outworkers (15.29% and 8%) because of the need for better wages and fringe benefits.

If there are different segments of women regarding their types of jobs in a segregated female labor market, women are also heterogeneous with respect to the dynamics of their domestic domains. In my sample, from a household point of view, the main distinction for the female workers interviewed was related to their life courses (Hareven, 1978; Ojeda, 1990). Their motives for labor market incorporation, women's own identities and the reasons for why they should be inside the family was different for "daughters," "sisters," "wives," "wives and mothers" and "household heads." For the above reasons I constructed groups for the analysis along two different lines, one based on if they were home-based or factory workers, and the other subdividing these two groups according to women's main life courses stages. Major moments in women's life course in this work were used as methodology to deal with the

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[4]The "compatibility" of home-based labor derives from the fact that it could be done at home. However, this apparent "compatibility" imposes new demands on women that are hard to handle. For example, they have to re-schedule their days; they need to reserve a site of their small houses as a working place; they have to take care of the carefully counted pieces of garments and they have to make sure the fabric remains neat. Besides, home-based labor implies new expenses like an increment in the electricity bill and the cost of needles, threads and machine repairs.

> synchronization of individual timing with the collective timing of the family unit, as each changes within different societal and historical settings. Essentially, (it explores) the interaction between "individual time," "family time," and "historical time." (Hareven, 1978:1)

This methodology uses women's major demographic events to analyze the changes their domestic groups go through because

> The transitions in women's life courses such as marriage and maternity are not only important passage rites in women's life at the individual level, they are also socio-demographic events that determine family transitions. (Ojeda, 1990:14)

Household composition[5] was also crucial for the analysis because of the hypothesis that guided the work: in Yucatan's garment industry in 1985-86, women were vulnerable to labor market segmentation mainly by virtue of their household dynamics (which of course change during their life span, in accordance with the family life cycle and their personal life course). According to Mason *et al.* (1978) in 1880 in Essex County, Massachusetts, women's labor force participation was primarily a function of marital status when age, marital status, ethnicity, literacy and family's economic status were used for the analysis.

The influence of the life cycle on the economic well-being of households is strong within the popular classes, mainly by determining the number of available wage earners. However, households make decisions to compensate this "natural" limitation, for instance, by incorporating other members in specific periods. For poor households these strategies are not new, but they seem to be increasing with the current economic crisis (Chant, 1994a; Duarte, 1988; González, 1988b). Authors such as González (1986) and Schmink (1979) have found that economic differences within the working population are determined more by the family life cycle than class by itself.

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[5]Using a new typology, explained in Chapter No. 4.

This project focused on the domestic domain and women's type of participation in the labor force (as factory or home-based laborer) in a concrete economic sector (garment industrial manufacturing), a particular social segment (Merida's popular urban sectors) and in limited periods: 1986-87 and 1991-92.

From the point of view of the three main "times" life course analysis involves (individual, family and history), the main macroeconomic trends shaping women's existences are an important background to consider. The systematic study of female labor force participation must be understood on the basis of

> (women's) position within the family, the family's position within the community and the community's economic structure. (Mason *et al.*, 1978:188)

This is the general methodological statement that guided this study.

Why Garment Workers?

Garment workers were selected for the analysis for two main reasons: On the one hand, industrial apparel production is a very important economic activity in Yucatán and because of the overall labor market segregation, women predominate as workers. In the state of Yucatan's secondary sector, apparel production is the most important source of female employment, especially taking into account home-based workers. Curiously, despite the great number of workers and the fact that garment production has a long tradition in Yucatán, the working conditions and every-day life of its laborers have never been researched before. Thus, the living and working conditions of these numerous female workers were almost totally unknown when the project began. In the urban area, the lack of information was especially important for the workers involved in clandestine sweatshops and home-based labor. The clandestine nature of these jobs and the little research attention that had been paid to

these laborers made them, despite their importance, almost socially "invisible" Hence, it was urgent to make them evident as an economic group with specific working conditions.

The 1980 census reported a population of 1,063,733 in Yucatan, 73% of whom were residing in urban areas. According to Castilla (1987), the figures of the Economically Active Population (EAP) in the 1980 census have reliability problems. The tremendous increase in the number of workers is hard to believe because it cannot be explained by concomitant changes in the state's productive structure. This is specially true for the reported increment of 271.5% in the female labor force from 1970 to 1980 (Table No. 1). Another meaningful problem in the 1980 census is that a huge 30% of women in the labor force could not be classified in any economic activity (Table No. 3).

Although Castilla (1987) worked on a data correction analysis for the EAP, their adjustment could only be performed for the total population (Table No. 2).

TABLE No. 1.
ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION
ACCORDING TO THE 10TH POPULATION CENSUS.

	1970	1980	ABSOLUTE INCREMENT	% OF INCREMENT
TOTAL	201,630	367,825	166,195	82.0
MEN	176,446	274,270	97,823	56.1
WOMEN	25,183	83,555	58,372	271.5

Castilla, 1987:7.

TABLE No. 2.
ADJUSTED ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION.

SECTOR OF THE ECONOMY	POPULATION	%
AGRICULTURE	101,473	32.22
COMMUNAL SERVICES	56,208	17.85
INDUSTRY	35,671	11.32
TRADE	33,621	10.67
BUILDING	22,433	7.12
TRANSPORTATION	10,763	3.41
FINANCING	5,038	1.59
ELECTRICITY	929	0.02
MINING	406	0.01
NOT CLASSIFIED	56,208	17.85
TOTAL	314,885	99.56

TABLE No. 3
FEMALE ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE POPULATION

SECTOR OF THE ECONOMY	FEMALE POPULATION	PERCENTAGE
SERVICES	31,911	34.000
AGRICULTURE	12,150	12.980
MANUFACTURING	9,124	9.750
TRADE	8,025	8.570
BUILDING	2,412	2.570
TRANSPORTATION	1,439	1.530
OIL AND GAS	12	0.001
MINING	42	0.004
UNABLE TO CLASSIFY	27,838	29.750
UNEMPLOYED	470	0.050
TOTAL	83,555	99.310

For this reason, despite the problems detected, the only figures that can be used to estimate the Female EAP are those of the official census (Table No. 3).

These figures show a clear predominance of the service sector. That is, many women were trapped in "feminine activities;" they worked for a wage mainly as teachers, nurses, secretaries, cooks, janitors and waitresses. In Mérida, this sector was still mostly represented by maids. Agriculture was an important source of female employment and, according to the census, women recognize themselves as workers of the primary sector because they classified themselves as such when the information was gathered. Without question, within manufacturing the must important activity was apparel production (Torres, 1986). The other important source of female employment was trade, where women tend to be mainly retail employees. The rest of the economic activities done by women were marginal in number and importance.

Based on these figures it is possible to establish, approximately, the number of garment workers in 1980. In manufacturing there were 9,124 women in the EAP, the great majority of them, apparel laborers. Now, garment manufacturing is composed of legal factories, as well as clandestine sweatshops and backyard home-based labor. The workers of the informal sector are usually not captured by official statistics. Also, commonly, home-based workers do not recognize themselves as paid laborers; at the most, they consider themselves self-employed.

During the field work it was possible to establish that there were more or less three clandestine workers for each one officially registered just in Mérida, the capital city of the State. Thus, there were about 27,372 clandestine workers added to the 9,124 registered in the census resulting in 36,496 women in manufacturing activities. If we add these 27,372 to the EAP, we get an adjusted figure of 120,927 economically active women. Of these female workers 30.18% could be employed in the clothing

industry. These approximate figures reveal the importance of apparel manufacturing for female employment in Yucatán.

Another reason for focusing on the garment sector was that around garment manufacturing a variety of life-styles are nested. In the countryside, for instance, Mayan female embroiderers from Maní perform their tasks in their communities and houses for industrial garment manufacturers and/or traders. They link to Meridan entrepreneurs through a network of middle men or jobbers who take them the cut fabrics, pick up and pay them for the work done. Being an embroidery designer and/or a good embroiderer is a means of social status and recognition within the Mayan communities. In Kimbilá all household members, including men, participate in the sewing of clothes;[6] while in San José Tzal mostly men sew slacks and pants for factories in Mérida, also linked to them by middle men. All these home-based tasks are paid by the piece.[7]

In 1985 most of the garment factories and sweatshops were (and still are) located in Mérida. In the city many women from the poor sectors of the society worked in the factories on apparel production. Another sector of women from the suburban area of the city went weekly to the factories to pick up cut fabric, then assembled and/or embroidered or performed another activity on the garments at home and returned them to the factories when the tasks were done. Still another

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[6]Mayan women in the countryside still wear the traditional embroidered dresses on an every-day basis.

[7]In the countryside, there is sexual segregation within apparel manufacturing. A field work I carried out in the sisal zone on the Summer of 1988 revealed me that men usually sewed slacks while women embroidered and assembled *hipiles*. Although both tasks were paid by the piece, slack assembly was better paid. Besides, men worked at their homes but for a full workday without interruption, while female home-based workers stopped sewing to cope with domestic chores.

group of women living in the same areas got the cut fabric at home predominantly through jobbers. They could also get the raw materials through neighbors, relatives or friends who go the factories to pick them up. These latter women often did not even know for which factories they were working.

Thus, the particular urban structure of garment manufacturing had the potential to deal with female laborers living in the same neighborhoods and working for the same economic branch, but in two diverse settings: as factory and as home-based laborers. Home-based workers internationally are predominantly married women with children, lack legal contracts and fringe benefits, get extremely low wages, usually work with their own means of production and face job insecurity. By contrast, factory workers are hired through legal contracts and get the benefits the local laws establish. Hence, apparel production was ideal to examine the main interconnections between worker's household dynamics and women's labor options in the segregation of workers of the same economic activity. Women in both sectors were carrying out almost the same industrial tasks but in different settings (home and factory) and with backyard laborers segregated into the worst working conditions.

Although women's incorporation into wage labor has been a main arena of research within women's studies, the predominant trend is to analyze female laborers with similar working conditions as a homogeneous group. Thus, the interplay between women's personal life-courses, their position within their households related to family life cycles, their labor options and their households responsibilities have been generally overlooked. Looking at this interplay from the household dynamics perspective into women's labor options is the main goal of this project. To accomplish this goal, for the analysis both groups of workers were subdivided on the basis of their

position within their households (daughters, sisters, wives, wives and mothers or household heads) to look at their particular way of incorporation into wage labor in apparel manufacturing.

To trace the main trends among women's lives in a period of economic restructuring a follow-up of a sub-sample of women interviewed in 1985-86 was done in 1991-92. This follow-up mainly had the purpose of determining major changes in women's lives: if single women, wives and mothers and household heads remained in the labor force and if they were worse or better off economically six years after.

Garment Production and the Crisis

During the 1985-86 field work, garment entrepreneurs were having problems sustaining their profit margins during the economic recession in México. Excessive inflation was constantly increasing the price of raw materials and machinery and, although they did not recognize it, they had augmented the number of home-based workers and subcontracting of clandestine sweatshops as a means of guaranteeing profits. The data for garment industry in Yucatan showed that as elsewhere (Standing, 1989) home-based workers were severely underpaid and lacked fringe benefits.

At the same time, inflation and recession were minimizing purchasing power and forcing more and more poor household members into the labor market, including women (Chant, 1994a; Duarte, 1988; González, 1986; Safa, 1990). The national economic crisis and the structural adjustment policies that the government implemented might have added economic hardships to Yucatecan households. However, Yucatan is a state facing a severe economic crisis since sisal collapsed

back in the second decade of the century, with broad sectors of its population in poverty.

Household composition, along with Yucatan's economic structure and cultural patterns, played a role in determining women's labor options. For married women with children, secluded in their homes as housewives and mothers, often home-based labor appeared to be "compatible" with their domestic chores. Traditionally, women comprised the majority among home-based workers in garment manufacturing, although in Mérida men were involved as well, especially, but not only, sewing "*guayaberas*"[8] as full-time workers.

Because home-based workers carried out their labor activities within their households, their role as housewives and mothers did not conflict with their paid labor. However, in addition to their traditional responsibilities within their households, married poor women must earn money to afford household expenses. Some researchers have reported that working wives are in the position of renegotiating their participation in household decision making (Benería and Roldán, 1987; Safa, 1990). But, at least in Mérida, garment workers, especially those home-based, labored under very poor circumstances, including low wages, lack of fringe benefits and job insecurity. These circumstances are reinforcing women's subordination and, besides, under these conditions poor women may have spent more time working, yet experienced a lower standard of living than before their entry into paid labor. Thus women participating in industrial garment production, particularly in clandestine home-based labor, were still clearly economically dependent on the earnings of their husbands and other male

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[8]Men's shirts.

relatives. Hence, low wages tended to make them appear to be incapable of sustaining themselves and their families.

The economic recession and the structural adjustment in Mexico were creating the need for a strategy of survival based on multiple wage earners within the poor population and Yucatan was not an exception (Chant, 1994a and b). But this strategy was already on-going in the state as a result of cultural patterns and as a way to cope with the consequences of the local "sisal crisis." Therefore, the massive entrance of women into the labor force was taking place in desperate economic circumstances, with women's salary directed at compensating low male's income, but despite women's added income, households remained poor.

Sampling

The working conditions in apparel manufacturing vary tremendously according to the size and infrastructure of the garment factories. For this reason, it was not convenient to interview workers from a few factories. Therefore, both groups of garment laborers were selected using a "quota sample" (Agresti and Finlay, 1986:25; Bernard, 1988:96) of 150 in each group, to be contacted in the open population.

Trying to randomize their selection as much as possible, elementary schools in poor *colonias* located in the suburban area of Mérida were visited. All public schools located in the southern and eastern part of Merida were visited. Children from 4th to 6th grade (in Mexico 6th grade is still part of elementary school) were asked about relatives or friends they knew who worked as apparel workers. Their names and addresses were recorded until 200 possible women in each group were listed. The random sample procedure would not have worked out because the actual number of

clandestine sweatshops and home-based workers and their geographical location is not known.

Before the interviews the addresses were checked. Many of the addresses were wrong; some women were private seamstresses instead of garment laborers; others had worked before as apparel laborers but were no longer in the labor force. Hence, while checking the addresses the "snowball procedure" (Bernard, 1988) was used. Already contacted apparel workers, owners of small businesses in the *colonias*, or just neighbors passing by were asked if they knew of any garment workers living nearly.

The data gathered during the field work dealt with the working conditions of the apparel workers; their personal socio-demographic characteristics and the socio-demographic features of their co-resident relatives; household economic organization (essentially who was doing what as a main activity) and its internal sexual division of labor.

When the data were coded, some interviews were incomplete and so had to be discarded. Thus, the final sample was constituted of 299 households: 150 (50.16%) corresponded to home-based workers and 149 (49.84%) to factory workers. However, in various households more than one garment worker was present. Therefore, information about the working conditions of 331 garment workers; 153 home-based employees (46.22%) and 178 factory workers (53.88%) was gathered.

To establish changes in women's labor activities, civil status and household composition, a sub-sample of at least 10% of the original workers were re-interviewed in 1991-92. Forty-three home-based laborers (27.5% of the original sample) and 62 factory workers (34.9%) were re-contacted (n=105). This frequency distribution was a

result of the fact that in those sub-groups either small or of specific interest to the research (such as household heads, single mothers, etc.) efforts were made to interview the entire original group again.

This information was gathered for the second part of the research, i. e., to establish main changes on women's lives when holding different positions within their households (daughters, sisters, wives, wives and mothers and household heads). These changes will be analyzed taking into account that women were formerly part of Yucatan's garment industry labor force.

It has been reported that in Mexico low income groups have implemented desperate household survival strategies in order to face the economic crisis and the structural adjustment policies (SAPs) that have been carried out by the government since 1982 (Chant, 1994a and b). The last decade in Latin America has been one in which "privatization of life" (Grassi, 1993:236) or "privatization of survival and the family" (Benería, 1992:97) has been on-going because responsibilities that formerly were guaranteed by the state, have been transferred to the households.

Diverse authors have carried out research on how poor domestic units have faced SAPs and the crisis (Benería, 1992; Chant, 1994a and b; González, 1986, 1988a, 1988b; González *et al.,* 1990; Safa and Antrobus, 1992). Among the main strategies that these scholars have found are the cutting down of household expenditures, the incorporation of more household members into paid work, the increase of extended households, an increase of household economic contributors, a tendency for women to remain in the labor market after marriage and reproduction and, for rural and urban households in certain countries (for instance, Mexico,

Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Jamaica, Haiti), an intensification of migration (Crummett, 1992; Safa and Antrobus, 1992).

All these changes have challenged men in their positions as sole economic providers (Safa, forthcoming). These tendencies are taking place hand in hand with intra-household tension to the extreme where women and their children have been abandoned, or have been the victims of domestic violence. Greater changes have been engendered in women's lives as a result of adjustment policies.

SAPs and the crisis have incremented household responsibilities for survival and have intensified the economic responsibilities of its members. Women have been particularly affected. Besides still having to deal with domestic chores and child rearing obligations, they now have to contribute to the household budget. Furthermore, it has been reported that domestic chores today include the production of goods and services that formerly were bought in the market, as a means of lowering down household expenses (Chant, 1994a). But in Yucatan for many poor households and women these strategies had been on-going long before the national crisis of the eighties as a consequence of the local sisal crisis an its socio-demographic effects.

Structure of the Study

There are two basic aims of this study: the first is to explore the main mechanisms of labor segmentation in the apparel manufacturing female working force in Merida, Yucatan; the second is to account for major changes in garment workers' lives. To accomplish these goals the project has been divided in two parts. The first one deals with major trends in Mexico's and Yucatan's economies and the working

conditions in Merida's apparel manufacturing. The second part focuses on household structure and women's living conditions and identities in two periods: 1985-86 and 1991-92. The work structure is organized as follows:

An outline of the industrial development of Mexico is presented in Chapter 2 as a means of understanding women's participation in the country's labor market. Since the study was made in Yucatan, the particularities of the state's economic development are also addressed. Chapter 3 describes the structure of garment manufacturing in Yucatan, emphasizing labor segregation in this economic sector and its structural relationships to women's positions in their households. Home-based labor as part of the informal sector is discussed. To better understand the every day life and working conditions in the state garment industry four case studies of large, medium-sized and small factories as well as a sweatshop are described in Chapter 4.

Chapter 5 discusses how co-resident groups are theoretically viewed and describes the typology used in this work to classify them. It also describes the household structure found in this research. Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 analyze the living conditions of women interviewed in 1985-86 and the main changes found in 1991-92 within working daughters and sisters; wives, wives and mothers and household heads, respectively. Finally, Chapter 10 draws some conclusions.

With this work structure the "historical time" (Chapters 2, 3 and 4), the "family time" (Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9) and the "individual time" (Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9) are analyzed for these workers (Hareven, 1978).

CHAPTER 2
AN OUTLINE OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF MEXICO

Introduction

Certainly, "the modern world-system" (Wallerstein, 1974) today relies in a single global capitalist economy that involves an international division, production, circulation and distribution of labor, power, wealth, goods and services. However, in this worldwide economy each country and region plays a particular role. Countries were not integrated into the world economy "at the same time, at the same rates, in the same ways, or with the same results" (Mintz, 1977:254). Each country and within each country each region had a previous historical development with living people that were not integrated nor they integrated themselves into capitalist relations in a rigid fashion through time and space. Furthermore, social stratification has characterized capitalist development and while selective social groups have become wealthy and "modern," many others have been left behind the benefits of "progress."

Thus, this global system is shaped by intermediate national and regional specificities, stratified societies, cultural traditions and family and personal choices and decisions. Because of the above, to understand household dynamics in a concrete social and historical setting, both the main macrostructural forces of the nation and the regional context in which the analyzed households live should be addressed. These broad economic forces influence and impose historical limits to people's choices and decisions (constituting the "historical time" in the life course model).

In line with this perspective, the basic aim of this chapter is to analyze Mexico's and Yucatan's contemporary economic development. For the country as a whole, the socio-demographic changes that took place after the import substitution policy are crucial to understand its current situation. On the other side, the economic crisis of the 80's and the government's structural adjustment policies have impacted people's lives, especially women. This impact is also discussed in this Chapter.

Yucatan's economic development will also be presented. The state's history is unique because the rise of sisal production at the turn of the century made it rich and prosperous, but sisal collapse was attached to a profound and severe regional economic crisis that has not been overcome. Hence, in 1985-85 and 1991-92 the social conditions of the interviewed women were facing were mainly due to an interplay between these two macroeconomic processes.

This Chapter is organized as follows:

a) First an outline of the historical perspective of Mexico's recent economic development will be presented. The current Mexican economic crisis can only be understood if the macroeconomic shifts that have taken place in the country for the last years are taken into account. Besides, these shifts have increased and impacted female work force participation in the labor market. The impact of these processes on women's forms of incorporation into the labor force are also described.

b) Second, the effects of the economic crisis on households and women's labor force participation are emphasized. The extent of the influence of the economic crisis on women's lives is difficult to assess with the data gathered, but its influence cannot be denied.

c) Third, the specificities of the economic development in Yucatan are addressed. If from a macroeconomic perspective the economic crisis of the 80's has affected the country as a whole, its effects have been shaped by the state's particular economic development and by local cultural patterns.[1] Since the second decade of the century Yucatan has faced a severe economic crisis due to sisal collapse. The so-called "sisal crisis" has now been merging with the effects of the national macroeconomic crisis of the 80's, but with sisal decline broad sectors of the state's population were extremely poor well before the eighties.

d) Finally, the interrelationships between sisal production and garment manufacturing in Yucatan are presented.

An Historical Perspective of Mexican Economic Development

Since the mid-1940's Mexico, along with most other Latin American countries, switched from being fundamentally an exporter of agricultural goods to become a country where industrialization was the main economic activity for capital accumulation. This process was the result of the Import Substitution Policy, widely promoted in Latin America after World War II. This policy was based upon subsidies and support from the local governments to national and foreign (mainly North American) investors in the secondary sector of the economy.

During World War II the European economies were severely affected by the war. This, among other circumstances, gave the United States enormous advantages in the world market and the international political scene. Also, as a result of the war

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[1]In Yucatan, Mayas are a living population whose cultural influence cannot be denied. However, it was not the focus of this research.

itself, this country obtained a large margin of profits which allowed it to expand its investments worldwide. This augmented the North American interest in Latin American industrialization. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, both created in 1944, as well as the Alliance for Progress, conceived in 1961, were programs and agencies in charge of promoting industrialization.

From the Latin American side, and basically through the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), part of the then recently created United Nations, industrial development was also promoted. According to Raúl Presbisch and other ECLA ideologist, import substitution would reduce inequality among the developing nations by allowing them to manufacture their own products. From this perspective, much of the disequilibrium in the economic relations between nations was due to the low prices put on the raw materials the Latin American countries exported, compared to the cost of importing manufactured good and technologies from the industrialized countries.

Thus, common interests were created between the ECLA, the local Latin American governments and the North American government. As a result of this combination of interests, multinational corporations invested large amounts in the region with great economic advantages granted by Latin American governments. Among these advantages were tax exemptions, low rates on public services (for instance, running water, telephone and electricity), as well as subsidies on certain raw materials such as sugar, flour and alcohol. These companies also saved expenses on salaries, due to the state assuming partial responsibility for labor force reproduction through public health and education and subsidies on transportation and basic products (for example, bread, sugar and *tortillas*).

During this first phase of internationalization of industrial capital, foreign companies used the local products of the countries where they were established. They also directed their production towards the national market, but the machinery and the technology used was still imported.

One of the results of this new industrial policy was the increasing interest of United States in Latin America and in its destiny. That is, due to the huge North American investments in Mexico the influence of the U.S. government on military, political and economic affairs of the region grew (Schmink, 1986).

Industrialization brought about a sudden change in the productive arrangements that caused significant shifts in the male and female labor force. The secondary sector of the economy grew enormously, first extensively using the infrastructure already installed in the region, and later through new investments (Rendón, 1990). Alongside the expansion of the industrial sector, trade and services in the enlarging cities grew as well. This phenomena was concomitant with a decline in the agricultural activities of the country.

This process of industrialization continued and consolidated into a stage in the sixties known as stabilized development (Rendón, 1990). During these years the secondary sector grew continuously, prices and the balance of payment were fairly stable. Along with the development of formal trade and formal services in the cities these conditions were able to generate significant sources of urban employment at a fairly stable rate (García, 1988).

Sustained economic development augmented the standards of living of major population sectors, mainly due to a recomposition of the overall population. Industrialization gave place to an intensive rural exodus to the cities (which still

prevails as a tendency today). This process of urbanization at high rates, which led to a recomposition of the labor force and the growth of a welfare state, was reflected in the expansion of public health services and greater schooling for the population. These, among other factors, brought about an important increase of the population in the country, mainly by reducing mortality rates and augmenting life expectancy. Thus, a demographic transition took place.[2]

The urban centers where industry was mainly installed (Mexico City, the State of Mexico, Guadalajara and Monterrey) showed the major population increase. As the industry, trade and service sectors of the economy grew, the number of emigrants to the cities also augmented, so the self-employed rapidly increased as well. Migrants who did not find insertion in the formal labor market, or in the governmental offices (which also underwent an important increase during the period), became self-employed. They added to the existing formal trade and services employment and contributed to the tertiarization of the Mexican economy.[3] The whole process created acute urban problems, which still have not been solved, such as the sudden increase and expansion of shantytowns around cities that lack all urban services and also suffer from sub-employment and underemployment.

However, the impact of this new economic model was not indifferent to age, place of birth, ethnic group, social class and gender of the population. For women this socio-demographic transition resulted in diversification and an increase of paid

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[2]"the population multiplied by a factor of four between 1950 and the mid-eighties and male's and women's life expectancy increased 20 years" (Cooper *et al*, 1989:12).

[3]García (1988:Chapter I)"*Las vicisitudes del sector industrial y la tesis de la terciarización excesiva en los países capitalistas desarrollados*" ("Changes in the industrial sector and the thesis of the excessive tertiarization in developing countries").

labor opportunities. Since 1940 the presence of women in the labor market has been increasing. It is true that the participation of men in factory work has occurred in much greater proportion than that of women's. However, trade and service jobs, as well as self-employment, have been absorbing the feminine labor force in significant numbers.

The main source of occupation for women driven into the labor force was, and still is, the service sector. At first, it was clearly dominated by maids, but was reduced after some years, without losing its importance.[4] Also, the expansion of health and educational services, government offices and secretarial work of private companies has given much employment to contingents of women (Rendón, 1990:36). In numbers, the economically active female population went from 19% in 1970 to 25% in 1979 and 32% in 1988 (Pedrero, 1990:149).

Since the seventies, the enrollment of women in manufacturing activities has seen a continuous increment, although it has faced a restriction: sexual segregation, which has confined women to the "proper-for-women" activities. The main industries which call upon the female labor force are: the food industry, the garment industry, and, more recently, the electronics manufacturing industry through the offshore international corporations called in Mexico maquiladoras. Typically, all these activities are intensive, repetitive, poorly paid and with very few possibilities for promotion. Besides, there is even a tendency that makes women occupy the positions where they receive the lowest wages inside the factories. Cutters, drivers as well as directors and administrators of these enterprises are mostly men.

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[4]For instance, in 1940, 72% of the women in the Economically Active Population were maids, by 1970 this proportion had been reduced to 43%. (Ramírez and Bautista, 1990:12).

In Mexico during the seventies wage labor for women has grown, mainly in the tertiary sector (both waged and non-waged). In these years trade and services grew faster than industrialization. This happened mainly because of the economic crisis in the economy, which occurred in the late seventies, and which slowed down the process of wage growth in the existing labor force. As a result, the incoming workers, both male and female, subscribed mainly to non-wage activities.

During the seventies the rate of female employment saw a rise of more than 50%, while male employment grew only 10%. The increasing participation of women was apparent throughout all age groups, including divorced and married women (de Oliveira, 1989:32). But gender segregation still dominated the labor market, so the main working fields for women were still in the tertiary sector. Within this sector the women-dominated activities were: food preparation and selling, teaching at the elementary level, socio-medical assistance and janitorial services. In these activities women outnumbered men.

With the economic crisis and the decrease in the impulse given to manufacturing before and during the seventies, particularly regarding durable consumer goods,[5] a male dominated sector of industry saw an important slowdown of labor force growth. This slowdown allowed female participation to become as important as that of men in the secondary sector of the economy, as women's job positions were not so strongly affected.[6] However, women's involvement in industry was also given in "ideal-for-women" activities (garment manufacturing, food

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[5]Machinery, refrigerators, etc.

[6]In 1970, 18.75% of the male EAP and 18.9% of the female was employed in mining, energy and industry. In 1979 the percentages of participation for these same economic branches were 20.9% and 21.7%, respectively (de Oliveira, 1989:34).

production, electronics, shoe manufacturing) or in offshore multinational corporations (de Oliveira, 1989:34). Self-employment within manufacturing activities is predominantly female labor, women outnumber men by a 2:1 ratio. Most of these women labor as non-waged family workers or as home-based factory workers through the putting-out system, a strategy used by large and medium-sized companies to save on production costs during the crisis.

In synthesis: The import substitution policy re-shaped Mexico's economic, social and demographic panorama. Urbanization and industrialization led to an increase of women's education and lowering of fertility and to their incorporation into the labor force. Trade, service jobs and self-employment have been a major source for female employment in the cities. Women's enrollment in manufacturing has been characterized by sexual segregation. Since the seventies and as a consequence of the economic crisis, trade and services have grown faster than industrialization and women have occupied these positions in greater numbers. Thus, import substitution and the economic crisis are key issues to understand the current "historical time" in the country.

Women and the Economic Crisis

The impact of the crisis on the female population is difficult to assess (Arizpe, n.d.). It cannot be assumed that the general situation of women today is a direct result of the economic crisis. On one hand, recession has only enhanced tendencies that were already present because of the previous economic policies; policies that, as has been pointed out, date from the end of World War II. On the other hand, the

crisis gave place to a new capital accumulation scheme, which has created new tendencies of work mobility that have affected female labor in particular ways.

As usual, recession has had an impact on women mainly due to social class distinctions, rural vs. urban origins, to prevailing cultural patterns, to phases in the family life cycle and to the position of women within their domestic groups (Feijoó y Jelín, n.d.:34). These differences focus research on specific social groups. However, some tendencies are generalizable to at least most of the urban popular groups, the waged and non-waged workers settled in the cities. These groups are the most numerous within Mexico's contemporary socio-historical context. Among other current economic phenomena, the contraction of formal urban employment and loss of salary purchasing power have had a direct impact on the reproduction of labor force, especially where survival depends on cash.

For daily and generational labor force reproduction, domestic work, which is almost always carried out by women, is essential. Until the economic recession in the late seventies, and especially before the implementation of structural adjustment policies, the State had actively participated in that reproduction of the labor force through subsidies on basic food products (*tortillas*, sugar, flour) and services (education, transportation, water, electricity) as well as participating in subsidizing worker's fringe benefits (mainly health care services).

The crisis and the structural adjustment policies are creating new patterns for the reproduction of the labor force. The State has removed subsidies and reduced public education and public health resources (López and Blanco, 1993). These shortages of social benefits have translated into an even larger pressure on the budget of every Mexican worker's household. There is also a growing mass of people

left out of Social Security, due to the enormous number of self-employed, sub-employed and underemployed. Only formally employed workers have social security rights. Exclusion from social security benefits has been increasing because of the "modernization" of the secondary sector (which has involved massive firings) and the closing of small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as public offices.

The popular sector's households have been forced to develop new "strategies of survival" to try to at least maintain their already low living standards, but their living standards have been going steadily downward (de Oliveira, 1989).[7] It has been reported that this affects society so deeply to the point of being an important factor in the increase of home violence against women and children, family rupture and mental disorders (Rocha *et al.,* n.d.). In order to face the crisis Latin American families have optimized their material and human resources by restructuring the family sexual division of labor. The actual mechanisms through which families do so have begun to be investigated thoroughly (Bolles, 1986; ECLA, 1988; Safa, 1989).

As remarked by de Barbieri and de Oliveira (1987), for urban women this restructuring of the domestic unit has meant a greater participation in making an income, based a great deal on self-employment. Another important change the crisis has brought into the current economic panorama, has been the extension of home based labor, as a result of industrial strategies seeking lower production costs (de Oliveira, 1989:47; Peña and Gamboa, 1989; Standing, 1989).

Even middle class women have had to intensify domestic work to save on goods and services they could before obtain in the market. The importance of

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[7]Household survival strategies is a term first used by Duque and Pastrana (1973) in a research carried out in Chile to define the activities poor household members implement to meet economic needs.

domestic work is inversely proportional to the budget level of a given household (Feijoó and Jelín, n.d.). Among the poorest Latin American households there are many woman heads (Barroso and Amado, n.d.:58). In a 1994 interview Carlos Jarque, chair of the National Institute of Statistics, Geography and Informatics,[8] stated that in Mexico there are approximately 16,000,000 households. In nearly 2,800,000 of them the household head lacks a spouse and 75% of these single-parent households are headed by women (nearly 2,100,000, 13.1% of the total) (*La Jornada*, June 29th, 1994:46).

Women's personal networks with family and friends have also been redefined: they tend to share in order to optimize their resources. A study shows that women with the most working hours are the ones who live in the worst conditions; women in Buenos Aires have been reported working up to 14 hour shifts (Rocha *et al.*, n.d.).

Under these conditions, women, on one hand, cannot make enough money to have satisfactory living conditions and, on the other hand, they cannot take good care of their young because their possibilities to do so have been displaced by seeking additional income (Rocha *et al.*, n.d.). It seems likely that this tendency is a cause for a higher mortality rate among infants who are descendants of working class women (Soles, 1988).

The contraction of formal employment has severely affected the households of the thousands of workers who have been fired. They have to content themselves with self-employment or sub-employment. Thus, the impoverishment and the loss of purchasing power have had important repercussions on living standards, even of the so-called "middle classes," which enjoyed a relatively high quality of life before the recession.

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[8]*Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática.*

The behavior of the female E.A.P. during the eighties had already enhanced certain tendencies present within the female labor market before. Among these the most important are: women participation in the labor force as self-employed and as waged workers in the service sector (de Oliveira, 1989).

Working women of different ages responded differently to crisis and adjustment policies. The group aged from 15 to 49 underwent a major increment during this period (García and de Oliveira, 1993:53). Previously to the crisis among this broad phase of childbirth and childbearing women significantly dropped out of the labor force.

Towards the end of the eighties there was also an increasing number of women in the manufacturing industry. This occurred not only because the labor intensive branches of industry which hired women were the most dynamic (Ramírez and Dávila, 1990:25), but also because the new accumulation model for factory work relied on flexible labor and putting-out systems and expanded the usage of female labor force.[9] Another reason for this larger participation of women in the secondary sector was due to the new international division of labor which promoted female occupations in the offshore multinational corporations, *maquiladoras*.

An overwhelming proportion of the economic burden caused by the economic policies adopted to face the crisis has been placed on the households. Presently, households have to pay for costs of reproduction of the labor force, while trying to

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[9]Labor flexibilization has been addressed as a new requirement for "modern" manufacturing. It implies the possibility of hiring and firing workers as production shifts its internal organization. It also means that workers can shift from one position into another in the production process. Because of the above labor flexibilization has involved restrictions in long term contracts workers formerly have and has collapsed workers positions into less specialized categories.

survive on $ 13,400.00 pesos a day (US $ 4.06 for an 8 hour workday).[10] However, price liberalization along with the contraction of formal employment, wage control and cuts in government social expenses, have made this burden too heavy to carry.

Latin American homes have implemented diverse strategies for survival during the ongoing crisis: one of these is the presence of multiple wage earners in the same household. The above has increased the number of working members within working class families. Currently the young and women and in desperate cases even children and the elderly are included. Households also have "extended" not only to increase the number of salaries on one budget, but to redistribute domestic work in order to allow more women in the family to get employment, as well. Also shelter and services such as electric lights, running water and others can be saved on through this arrangement. Under these circumstances the family has been a fundamental support for the population during the crisis (Benería, 1993; Chant, 1994a; Duarte, 1987; González *et al.*, 1990; González, 1993; Safa and Antrobus, 1993). The crisis has increased the number of poor households and has enhanced its strategies for survival in scope and intensity. However, some of the same strategies have been carried out by poor population sectors long before the crisis (Duque and Pastrana, 1973; Lomnitz, 1977; Schmink, 1979 and 1984).

Characteristics of domestic units such as composition, phase within the life cycle and age, gender, educational level of the household head, regulate and administrate the demand for labor in the work market (García *et al.*, 1982). The decisions of who enrolls into paid labor and who goes on studying are taken within the

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[10]Minimum legal salary for an eight hour workday in 1993. Throughout the text *pesos* (the Mexican currency until December 31st, 1993) are used instead of "new *pesos*." A thousand *pesos* = 1 new *peso*.

home. However, it has adequately been pointed out that family and home are not to be idealized. It is true that they protect and help their members, but the fact that households are penetrated by internal conflicts and an unequal distribution of power cannot be ignored, neither that there are clear dominance relations based on gender and generation among its members (Roldán, 1988). Furthermore, the impoverishment faced by the popular sectors is surely creating tensions and conflicts due to the rearrangements provoked by the necessary implementation of new survival strategies.

Daughters and married women with older children, can get involved more easily in outside home jobs. However, women within nuclear families with young children of school age, resort preferably to jobs which are "compatible" with their household chores.

Under these circumstances, self-employment seems "ideal" for married women because they keep control over their working day and can engage in activities they can do at home. However, these jobs are generally the ones with the lowest pay and cannot be regularly obtained, they include washing and ironing clothes, baking cakes, cooking and selling food and making clothes confection. Because of the above, despite the low salaries and the non-existent fringe benefits that characterize industrial home-based labor it is a better paid, more regular and more rewarding job for married women with small children.

Thus, if for businessmen home-based labor saves expenses and helps cope with the crisis, for poor women it signifies earnings without abandoning their homes. Hence, it is not surprising that this kind of employment has extended so much during the eighties in both the cities and the countryside. However, industrial outworkers are one of the most vulnerable sectors of the female labor force:

-They do not have formal contracts. This means that without notice they can stop receiving working material.

-Their salaries are extremely low; they are paid by the piece and the payment, as well as the amount of work to be done, is arbitrarily set by the employer week by week.

-They do not have health care services nor fringe benefits.

-The vast majority of the workers have to use their own working instruments and pay for their maintenance and operation costs.

-Even though they commonly know other workers in the same circumstances, they cannot organize themselves to try to improve their working conditions because they know that if they did, supervisors and intermediaries would just stop sending them working material.

Furthermore, this way of insertion of women into wage labor does not question their fundamental subordination within household dynamics. Women are still solely responsible for all domestic chores and their contribution to the household budget is so low that it is seen as pin money. This causes women and children to continue to economically depend on working men, thus reinforcing women's subordination. Under these circumstances it is easy to conclude that incorporation of women into the labor market does not always imply emancipation. On the contrary, many times wage labor for women means working a double day without improving much their economic conditions.

In summary: The economic crisis has increased the number of poor households and both the contraction of the formal employment and government wage control have impacted negatively worker's living standards. The Mexican government

has reduced or cut down subsidies on goods and services transferring more economic responsibilities to households. Under these circumstances households have played a very important role coping with the crisis. For women these macroeconomic changes have meant greater participation in the labor force and an intensification of household chores. However, it has to be consider that among poor sectors, these household strategies have always been important. Multiple wage earners, extended households and homework intensification have a long tradition in Latin America (Duque and Pastrana, 1973; Lomnitz, 1977; Schmink, 1979). For women a very important part of their "historical time" is determined by the social and cultural conditions that shape their involvement and participation in these household strategies.

Specificities on the Economic Development of Yucatan

Introduction

The macroeconomic panorama outlined before dealt with the country as a whole. However, as previously stated, in Mexico there are strong regional specificities that should be taken into account. For instance, import substitution and the economic crisis impacted differently industrialized zones, rural communities and the Northern and Southern borders.

Since the first decades of the century Yucatan has been traditionally considered a poor state which along with Oaxaca, Chiapas and Guerrero have been reported to have an Indian population with one of the country's lowest living standards. In Yucatan Maya culture is strong and shapes the rhythm and cosmovision of the state's life. Maya language can be heard almost everywhere,

even in Merida. In the capital city it is not uncommon to see *mestizas*[11] wearing the traditional female Maya outfit walking down the streets and the Spanish spoken in Yucatan has an evident Maya influence,[12] to mention some of the most obvious elements of the Maya culture.

As it will be analyzed, Yucatan has faced a very strong economic crisis derived first from a price drop and then from a decreased demand for sisal fiber and sisal industrialized goods in the international market. This crisis has been on going for decades. The secondary sector is small in Yucatan (according to the 1980 Census, industry involved only 11.32% of the EAP and building construction 7.12%), the primary sector is still important (according to the figures of the 1980 Census 32.22% of the EAP belong to this sector), but the state's economy relies on the tertiary sector, which is currently the most dynamic one (capturing 49.9% of the EAP in 1980).

However, in Yucatan the tertiary sector includes fancy hotels and well-established restaurants and travel agencies[13] which co-exist with many small repair shops (cars, shoes, electric appliances), small business (food, drinks, grocery stores) and a huge self-employed population (full-time and part-time maids, clothes washers and ironers, seamstresses, hammock handicrafters, *deshierbadores*, mechanics, gardeners, car-washers, aluminum workers, bricklayers, street sellers, etc).

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[11]The way Mayan women are called.

[12]For example, to differentiate between the older and smaller brothers and sisters (*hermanos* and *hermanitos* and *hermanas* and *hermanitas*; brothers and little brothers and sisters and little sisters) and to use the same verb for lost and found (*buscar*; found) are translation from the Maya.

[13]Tourism is by far the most dynamic sector of Yucatan's economy today.

Nevertheless, the state is not self-sufficient, its economy is subsidized by Mexico's federal government.

Yucatan's economic development

For the last century, the economic development of Yucatan, the structure of the state's labor market, the standards of living of its population, its distribution along much of the territory and other major social, economic and political process have been linked to the rise and decline of the production and industrialization of the fiber obtained from sisal (*Agave fourcroydes*). The main application of the fiber of this plant is as raw material for making ropes and sacks, formerly used widely in agriculture.

According to Castilla and Reyes (1991) there are three main stages of sisal production in Yucatan:

a) The first is from 1885 to 1915, which corresponds to the culmination of the agro-exportation of sisal.[14] This period was characterized by the making of immense local fortunes, side by side with the oppression of a great proportion of the population, mainly those from Mayan origin, through the "*peonaje*" system of production that characterized the *haciendas*. This manner of organizing production made *peones* work very hard, while condemning them to debts with the *hacendados* (the owners of the land and other means of production) and the *tienda de raya* (local store), that they could never finish paying. This tied the *peones* to the hacienda's process of production of sisal, while condemning them to misery.

[14]The expansion of sisal production started in 1852. This year the Therabaud Bros. gave the first loan to Eusebio Escalante (Villanueva, 1990).

b) From 1920 to 1970 a long transition to decaying stage of sisal production took place, in which the plant lost much of its importance for the state's economy, thus, impacting negatively on the economy of Yucatan.

c) The third stage goes from 1970 to date. It was an epoch of fundamental rearrangement and transformation, whose basic feature is a massive migration from the countryside to the capital city, Merida, which today houses a great proportion of the population of the state. Since 1984 local governments have tried to "modernize" the state. The key has been the installment of off-shore multinational corporations for export.[15] Other important facts in this phase are the privatization of CORDEMEX (the company charged with the industrialization of sisal fiber, formerly owned by the government) in 1990 and the promotion of the "Program for the Sisal Zone,"[16] which "retired" peasants older than 50 from sisal production and stopped the subsidies for this crop.

From the beginning sisal production depended on the international market, mainly that of the U.S. It also relied on loans which were of U.S. origin as well. Because of the above, the price of the fiber started to go down when International Harvester promoted its production in Brazil (Baños, 1989:10). This seriously affected the economy of Yucatán. Since then, the so-called "sisal crisis" has characterized the economy of the state.

In the thirties, as a strategy to face the sisal crisis, the state's industrialization was promoted under the belief that industrialized goods would be better sold on the

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[15]Through a program called "Sisal Rearrangement and Integral Industrialization of Yucatan Program" ("*Programa de Reordenación Henequenera y Desarrollo Integral de Yucatán*"). (*Gobierno del Estado*, 1984).

[16]*Programa de Reordenación Henequenera.*

international market. Both World War II (1939-1945) and the Korean War (1950-1955) increased the demand for industrialized sisal products; however, these periods were transitory. The invention of synthetic fibers in the sixties had another negative impact on an already fractured structure. It has been reported that from 1970 to 1980 the demand for natural fibers dropped 53% and the requirement for industrialized products from natural fibers went down 49% (*Gobierno del Estado de Yucatán*, 1984:21). As a matter of fact, Yucatán has faced the consequences of exploitation of a product that stopped being profitable.[17] Since then, an important part of Yucatan's land and population has been dedicated to the harvesting, industrialization and commercialization of sisal, but this product is unable to contribute importantly to the Internal Brute Product.

In 1938 the agrarian reform introduced by Lázaro Cárdenas abolished the *haciendas* and gave the land to the farmers. However, by then sisal was not only unable to create fortunes, but it was even unable to decently support the economy of the farmers and their families.

The government's agencies such as *El Banco Agrario, El Banco de Crédito Ejidal* and *BANRURAL*, were formed in order to organize and sponsor the production of the natural fiber. Through these agencies intervention the most important part of the income of a peasant ended up being "loans" given for sisal seeding and harvesting. Besides, peasants lost control over the organization of production. Because of this unique way of organizing production, Yucatan ended up having

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[17]Fiber exportation grew rapidly, it reached 150 thousand kilos in the decade 1860-70, to its peak: 210 thousand tons in 1916 (Castilla and Reyes, 1990:82).

"*ejidos* without peasants" in the sisal zone.[18] To further complicate sisal production, industrialization and commercialization in Yucatan, until the sixties the industrial plants which processed sisal fiber remained in the hands of private entrepreneurs. In the sixties the government created CORDEMEX and took charge of the industrialization of the fiber. However, this did not solve the "sisal problem."

In 1991 according to the new dominant neoliberal economic policies, the company was sold to private corporations. As a part of the same economic policies, in 1992 the government of Yucatán indemnified approximately 45,000 peasant sisal producers, giving them from $ 2,000,000.00 to $ 8,000,00.00 (US $ 660 to US $ 2,650) and guaranteeing retired people of fifty-year-old or older $ 105,000.00, a month (US $ 35) (*Diario de Yucatán*, July 18th, 1992). Nowadays, Yucatán's countryside is living a climate of deep uncertainty, not only because its economic destiny is not clear, but also because poverty, unemployment and sub-employment will cause tension to build in social and political life. After the actual destruction of the *ejido* system the economy of the state has not been able to achieve a more stable situation. The "economic reconversion" that the government said was on going does not seem to have succeeded, in spite of the millions of *nuevos pesos* invested.[19]

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[18]Because they do not match peasant's features. *Yucatán: ejidos sin campesinos*, is a title of a recent book (Baños, 1989).

[19]For example, in 1984 and through the *Programa de Reordenación Henequenera y Desarrollo Integral de Yucatán* the governor promoted the state's industrialization. This industrialization was based on the installation of *maquiladoras* (offshore multinational corporations). A campaign was carried out in Florida and Louisiana to attract American capital to the region. Besides, several *parques industriales* (industrial facilities) were built. However, by 1991 only 21 plants had been installed (*Informe de Gobierno*, 1991).

In the so-called sisal zone, unemployment and sub-employment as well as poor living standards have been and still are "the normal situation." This situation is obviously not going to be solved by the few thousands given to the former *ejidatarios*, nor are the retired going to solve their ever growing economic anxiety with the small amount that has been guaranteed them. On the contrary, living conditions in the zone are expected to challenge the never ending endurance of the Mexican peasants once more.

In synthesis: The economic crisis and the structural adjustment policies of the eighties have impacted Yucatan's working population. Government's wage control has affected wage workers regionally. The government's cuts on subsidies to goods and services have transferred part of the reproduction costs to the household budget. But because of Yucatan's particular economic development and the sisal crisis it involved, reliance for survival on the family and the household, the presence of extended domestic groups with multiple wage earners, the intensification of domestic work for women, have been strategies extensively used by broad sectors of the Yucatecan urban and rural population. Therefore in Yucatan's working class it is almost impossible to grasp which household strategies are due to the economic crisis of the eighties and which ones were there long before as a consequence of regional economic processes and cultural reasons. In the state broad sectors of the population have been living in economic crisis almost permanently.

Garments in Yucatán

Since the twenties, and more rapidly since the fifties, and even more so from the seventies on, urban migration from the sisal producing regions of Yucatan has

been a significant demographic feature. Merida and Cancun (a tourist resort created in the seventies) have generally been the end points of this migratory process. This has caused major increments in the suburban and urban populations of these two cities on the peninsula. It is very likely that this tendency will be enhanced by the new actions towards sisal production taken by the government.

Regarding the impact of the rearrangement of the sisal- attached rural population, especially on the development of the industry of the city of Merida, Castilla and Reyes (1991:79) argue that:

> The capital generated by this industry (sisal industry) structured . . . an urban-rural system centered in Merida, consolidating an urban space in terms of its integration to the general production conditions. The social division of work made rural production to the city, which concentrated and organized the material and social resources.

It might just be, and this would have to be investigated further, that the geographic characteristics of the state had an impact on this phenomenon. Until the present, the fifty eight *municipios* (counties) which conform the sisal zone are all located around Merida.[20] This has made it possible to transfer labor to and from the capital city easily, thus:

> Merida has functioned as financial and commercial center and concentrated the material support for agro-industry. Other urban uses have been parallel. The low industrial development of the country and the partial isolation of the Yucatán Peninsula from the rest of the country, have given rise to small industries in order to fulfill the demand in the new market for food, beverages, chocolate, cigarettes, candles, etc. (Castilla and Reyes, 1991:83)

The garment industry is one of these secondary industries, even though at the time it was almost an artisan's activity. In 1869 local tailor shops introduced the Singer straight-sewing machine which caused a significant increase in production.

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[20]There are 106 *municipios* in all.

Aside from this technological advance, the increasing demand for European-styled clothes from a growing middle class with a higher income[21] made clothing manufacture a flourishing business. In Merida the number of tailor shops went from 62 in 1880 to 479 in 1900, aside from 348 dressmakers and 1,937 registered wage workers garment manufacturing. From then on, tailor shops resorted to home-based workers as a strategy to face the seasonal fluctuations in demand for clothing.

In 1936 Don Pedro Mercader founded the first garment factory, improving the production process by dividing the assembly stage from the finishing. In the beginning, clothing factories eliminated home-based labor. However, tailor shops coexisted for a considerable time with the first factories, which even paid tailor shops for clothes when the demand for production was higher than the capacity of the factory. When tailor shops faced the same problem, they resorted to home-based workers.

In 1951 another tailor, Don Miguel Moreno, introduced the industrial production of *guayaberas* in Yucatán. This garment set the basis for what twenty years later would be the industry's boom, setting up the most fruitful line of production for Yucatecan clothing businessmen.

When the production line was introduced to clothes making, the volume of production at very low costs increased a great deal. Companies dedicated to the production of these articles multiplied. The existence of subcontracting was favored by this way of organizing production. Complete phases of work could be carried out outside the factories. This resulted in an increasing number of clandestine workshops

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[21]Produced by the sisal-induced economic climax.

and home based workers, inaugurating a means of production which has been maintained until the present day.

When interviewed, the oldest owners of the first garment factories agreed that the golden days for the guayabera industry in the state were that of the beginning of the term of President Luis Echeverría (in the early 70's). He personally promoted this piece of clothing inside and outside the country. However, at the end of his presidential term the recession which affected the whole country also slowed down the growth of the industrial confection of clothing. Besides, similar products appeared in Asia and Puerto Rico at low prices.[22] This by itself created a crisis within this industrial sector, resulting in unemployment. However, this unemployment was not so evident because the majority of the unemployed women were home-based workers. So, once again, the outworkers system proved their "flexibility." A large number of these kind of employees were fired without recourse to protest labor rights violations by the companies, nor any contract obligations given to them.

The factory owners said that the crisis was partly overcome in 1982 by switching from the making of *guayaberas* to the making of "casual" clothing which allowed them to capture the whole Southeast Mexican market.[23]

This market switching was surely necessary, but also insufficient to reactivate the growth of garment industry during the crisis. Business people faced considerable inflation and had problems with selling their articles due to the impact of recession on the average home budget. The crisis forced people to cut down on their expenses,

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[22]Up to 1975, 50% of the production of *guayaberas* was exported, this percentage dropped to 20% in 1975 (*Diario de Yucatán*, September 22, 1976).

[23]Clothes for daily wear.

therefore spending less money on clothes. For sure, garment entrepreneurs increased subcontracting strategies, relying more on clandestine workshops and home-based workers. The garment industry found once more the way to become "competitive" during the crisis, using the labor force which has historically demonstrated itself to be extremely "flexible."

In synthesis: The post World War II import substitution policy changed the country's economic dynamics. In many ways, contemporary Mexico was shaped by the industrialization and the urbanization this policy emphasized. These recent socio-demographic trends increased women's incorporation into wage labor, although the Mexican labor market remained strongly segregated.

The crisis of the 80's and the structural adjustment policies carried out by the government enhanced some socio-demographic tendencies. Very importantly women's incorporation into paid jobs. Both the crisis and the adjustment policies impacted household strategies, especially women within the households.

In Yucatan these national economic trends are embedded with the local "sisal crisis." Maybe because of the sisal crisis and the economic constraints it imposed on broad sectors of the population, households in Yucatan have traditionally been an important factor for survival.

In the state home-based labor for garment manufacturing has been used since the turn of the century. However, because of its flexibility, garment businessmen used home-based labor extensively to face the first stages of the crisis. They succeed in reactivating this economic branch, but at the expense of worker's legal rights.[24]

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[24]Victor Manzanilla, then governor of Yucatan, stated in 1991 that the garment industry that year grew 100% with respect to 1990.

The national and local economic contexts discussed in this chapter provide the background for the analysis of the specificities of the local garment industry and household dynamics of the women included in the sample that would be the focus of the following chapters. From my point of view these are the main processes that can account for the macroeconomic forces involved in shaping the interviewed workers' "historical time."

CHAPTER 3
STRUCTURE OF YUCATAN'S GARMENT INDUSTRY

Introduction

After the overall economic panoramas of Mexico an Yucatan have been outlined, garment production in the state will be addressed. How garment production is organized is a very important component on the construction of their identities. Besides, in Merida's secondary sector garment manufacturing is economically important and, as elsewhere, women have predominated in this economic branch.

The formal and informal sectors in apparel production and its interconnections will be presented, both theoretically and empirically. Diffuse factories is the term chosen to deal with garment production in Yucatan. This term intends to make a clear distinction between a capitalist production system that relies on home-based labor and sweatshops, like clothes manufacturing is, and other home-based production forms unrelated to the secondary sector.

The working conditions on the factories and home-based labor are presented in this same Chapter. A clear labor segregation was found while factories reduce in size, with home-based workers at the bottom of the pyramid. At the same time, women were segregated to either type of job by virtue of their position in their households. Wives and mothers were found predominantly in home-based labor and daughters and household heads in the factories. Wives and sisters were infrequently part of the garment manufacturing labor force. Household heads working as home-

based workers were found to be a vulnerable group of women. Their age, lack of a labor trajectory and rural origin contributed to made them poor and afraid to reach the labor force. The data gathered led to the conclusion that women's position in the household is by far the most important variable to place women in either type of job.

A theoretical discussion of industrial outwork as part of the informal economy is developed and the fact that in Yucatan illegality permeates both the formal an the informal sector is highlighted. Lastly, case studies are used to illustrate concrete interrelations between the formal and the informal sector in Yucatan's garment industry.

Formal-informal Interconnections: "Diffuse Factories"

Like in many other cities in Mexico (Alonso, 1990; Benería and Roldán, 1987; Wilson, 1989) and the rest of the world (Abreu and Sorj, 1986; Barreto, 1982; Gladden, 1987; Ypeij, 1993), Mérida's industrial garment manufacturing is carried out by legally registered large, medium and small factories,[1] as well as clandestine sweatshops and rural and urban home-based workers. They all relate to each other through subcontracting, either by direct relationships or with the participation of intermediaries. Clandestine sweatshops, intermediaries and home-based workers conform the so-called "informal sector" in apparel manufacturing.

However, the activities taken up by the formal and informal sectors in the local clothing industry constitute diverse moments of the same global production process. Factories, sweatshops and home-based workers virtually become "external"

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[1]According to the local office of the National Chamber of the Garment Industry, the large factories have more than 60 employees, the medium ones between 20 and 59 and the small ones 19 or less.

departments of other apparel industries for assembling, embroidering, tucking, ironing and other activities. This manner of organizing production creates intricate subcontracting networks (Benería and Roldán, 1987, Peña and Gamboa, 1992) that Accornero (1981) has called "the diffuse factory."

In Yucatan, this form of production arrangement is carried out by a method similar to the "putting out system" implemented in Europe at the beginning of capitalism. The "putting out system" was used to integrate rural sectors into manufacturing activities, they carried out their tasks at home (Kriedte *et al.*, 1981:101-107).[2]

As in other Latin American countries, the economic panorama lived in Mexico since 1982 has been shaped by an economic crisis and neoliberal structural adjustment policies (SAPs), supposedly directed at reactivating the economy. From the state's point of view, SAPs for the secondary sector should lead to "modernization" through industrial restructuring, which involves the use of new technology, reorganization of production and flexibilization of labor.[3] Supposedly, modernization is directed at making local production competitive in the international market.

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[2]Quintal (1990) argues that some terms are useful only to understand the social dynamics during the beginning of capitalism and that might be the case of "putting out system," clearly a way of recruiting a rural labor force.

[3]Labor flexibilization means less specialization, often attached to non-Fordists modes of organizing production. However, it also means that the number of workers should be constantly adjusted to production requirements, so many are fired. As a consequence workers are now hired on a temporary basis and they have lost many of the legal rights they had accomplished during the implementation of the import substitution policy.

However, in reality, medium and small factories, as well as sweatshops (the great majority of Mexican industry), do not have the capacity to become "modern." Thus, during the field work it was detected that in 1985-86 these enterprises faced the first stages of the crisis by significantly increasing the subcontracting of sweatshops and outworkers. Hence, home-based industrial work (present in garment manufacturing throughout its history) has acquired a new meaning: it is one of the most commonly used formulas to flexibilize labor.

During the crisis the intensification of subcontracting has been followed by all the industrial branches that intensively use labor force. It has been reported that they all have augmented their links with smaller firms and home-based labor as a means of guaranteeing profit margins despite economic shortages.[4] Through subcontracting, it has been possible for these enterprises to minimize production costs by avoiding official labor regulations. Thus, the rights that the working class acquired in the preexisting phase of capital accumulation, are being blurred (Concheiro, 1989:44; de la Garza, 1989:478).[5]

As Tamez (1989:7) has pointed out, in real terms industrial restructuring and labor flexibilization have meant:

> massive firings . . . a sell out of government's enterprises, technological innovations in some economic branches, institutionalization of underemployment, . . . more foreign investments and modifications of labor processes. Furthermore, industrial restructuring has changed the unions' structure and has weakened worker's positions in negotiating their contracts.

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[4]Like garment manufacturing and shoe making (de la Paz, 1988). Although it has been reported that even multinational corporations have been using home based labor (Benería and Roldán, 1987).

[5]Minimum legal wages, work days of eight hours for five days a week and, very importantly, long term contracts when hired.

In the contemporary context, subcontracting of sweatshops and home-based work has also been used as a mechanism for destructuring the industrial working class because it has been used as a means to promote extreme production decentralization (Concheiro, 1989:50; Standing, 1990). Exchanging formal workers for informal ones through subcontracting has also been useful in legal confrontations with workers (Portes, 1988). Let us examine two examples:

a) In Mexico City garment factory owners significantly increased subcontracted home-based workers when the "19 of September Union" was created after the 1985 earthquake.

b) In Merida the same strategy was followed after a conflict with workers of the "*Industria Textil Maya*" (*Diario de Yucatán*, May 19, August 21 and 23; September 5, 1986).

Differential Working Conditions among Workers

The data gathered shows that there is clear labor segregation between formal and informal sectors within the garment industry. Legal minimum wages as well as fringe benefits considered under the Federal Labor Law (FLL)[6] are only to be found among registered factory workers. Workers in clandestine sweatshops and especially home-based workers, are beyond the reach of these supposedly law-given-rights.

The labor force used through out-labor is not regulated by contracts, so there are no established wages to be paid or fringe benefits to be enforced. These are subjected to labor instability due to the fluctuations given all year long according to fashion patterns and volume of production. Not only the salaries and labor conditions

[6]*Ley Federal del Trabajo.*

are dependant on these fluctuations, but also the employment sources themselves, as a different number of workers is needed throughout the year.

The comparison between the salaries of factory workers and those of outworkers offered some difficulties. In the first place, only 140 home-based workers and 103 factory workers were interviewed in 1985; the rest of them were contacted in 1986, when higher salaries had been established. Hence, to avoid misleading results, only the income of those workers interviewed in 1985 (the great majority of the home-based workers and a big proportion of the factory ones) will be included in this analysis. Second, because payments were enforced by the piece, the work day had a direct influence on the final income received. And while home-based workers labored an average of 5 hours a day[7] during their "free time," factory workers had an average labor day of 8.75 hours.[8]

Without adjustment the salaries between the two groups were significantly different; while the average home-based worker perceived a salary of $ 12,820.50 monthly[9] (38.3% of the minimum legal wage -MLW-), factory-contracted workers earned $ 26,215.04[10] (78.4% of the MLW) ($P<.0005$). These data show that factory workers, even when working in average

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[7]Standard deviation = 2 hours.

[8]Standard deviation = 1.26 hours.

[9]Standard deviation = $ 6,800.80, denoting great variability within the group.

[10]Standard deviation = $ 8,048.70. $P < .005$, thus, the wages of the two groups are statistically different.

TABLE No. 4.
T-TEST FOR MEAN WAGES OF FACTORY AND HOME-BASED WORKERS.

	NUMBER OF CASES	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	STANDARD ERROR
HOME-BASED	140	12,820.03	6,800.77	574.77
FACTORY	103	26,215.05	8,048.70	793.06
SUM OF TWO GROUPS	243	18,498.03	9,892.65	
F Value	Two tail P =	Separated estimated variance t Value	Degrees of Freedom	P =
1.40	.065	-13.68	197.34	.000

more than the 8 hours a day established by the FLL, perceived less than the minimum wage (Table No. 4).[11]

To eliminate the influence of these diverse work days on wages, they were adjusted to 8 hours.[12] Through this procedure it also became evident that in average the actual salary of factory workers for a legal work day was 26% under the minimum legal salary. The adjusted incomes came out to be $ 21,734.25[13] (65% of the MLW) for out-laborers and $ 24,715.43[14] (74% of the MLW) for factory workers. Hence,

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[11]In 1985 this wage was $ 33,450.00 a month.

[12]Using the formula

$$\frac{\text{Real daily wage}}{\text{Real work day}} = \frac{X}{8}$$

[13]Standard deviation = $ 15,486.09, showing again the great disparity of wages paid to the home-based workers.

[14]Standard deviation = $ 8,155.35. Adjusted wages of both groups are also significantly different P < .054.

neither of these salaries reach the official minimum wage of $ 33,450.00 a month (Table No. 5).

TABLE No. 5. T-TEST FOR MEAN ADJUSTED WAGES OF FACTORY AND HOME-BASES WORKERS.				
	NUMBER OF CASES	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	STANDARD ERROR
HOME-BASED FACTORY	140 101	21,734.25 24,715.44	15,486.10 8,155.3	1,308.81 811.48
SUM OF TWO GROUPS	241	22,983.62	12,991.55	
F Value	Two tail P =	Separated estimated variance t Value	Degrees of Freedom	P =
3.61	.000	-1.94	221.01	.054

To establish if there were significant statistical differences between fringe benefits in the two groups, a statistical analysis was also carried out (this time based on data from the whole sample). Considering that both, groups of workers (home-based and factory) and fringe benefits (vacations, Christmas money, loans and enrollment in the *IMSS*)[15] are all categorical variables, Lambda was used to deal with the relationships between them (Norusis, 1988:285-289). Two nominal variables are related if they vary jointly (Agresti and Finlay, 1986:198). For categorical variables

[15]In Mexico, by law every worker should be registered in the *Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social* (IMSS). With worker's enrollment not only medical care for he/she and his/her family is provided, it also furnish other fringe benefits such as a pension when retired, free day-care centers for working mothers, stores where products are cheaper, resorts to spend vacations, etc.

this means that the presence or absence of a characteristic of a variable depends in some way on the conditional distribution of the other, according to the diverse categories of classification.

One of the most useful ways of carrying out this analysis is a two way table (Norusis, 1988). Two categorical variables are statistically independent if the conditional distribution of one variable is equal to every category of the other variable. Lambda establishes the degree of association determining how much the prediction gets better if the conditional distribution of one variable is used to predict the conditional distribution of the other. Thus, this procedure is based on a proportional reduction error (PRE).

For instance, a value of Lambda=0.183 means that knowing the conditional distribution of one variable and using it to predict the conditional distribution of the other, the prediction got better 18.3%. If Lambda=1, it could be considered that the prediction got better 100%, thus, it can be concluded that those two variables are closely related. If Lambda=0, knowing and using the conditional distribution of one variable to predict the conditional distribution of the other was useless. If this happens, it can be concluded that these two variables are not related.

As for fringe benefits, 96.7% of home-based workers did not have a single legal benefit, 2% received loans and paid holidays[16] and 1.3% were enrolled at the *IMSS*.[17] Out of the factory workers interviewed, 49% claimed to have all the fringe

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[16]Without being paid, but remaining in the labor force.

[17]This percentage stands for two workers. One was a factory worker and had a traffic accident when going to work. The other one was also a factory worker that got sick of tuberculosis. The owner of the factory gave her a sewing machine, let her continue working at home and maintained her registration in the factory so she could have medical care from the government.

TABLE No. 6.
FRINGE BENEFITS BY TYPE OF WORKER.

FRINGE BENEFITS	HOME-BASED	FACTORY	TOTAL
ALL		89 100.0 50.6	89 27.1
ONLY *IMSS*	2 6.5 1.3	29 93.5 16.5	31 9.4
NONE	148 72.9 96.7	55 27.1 31.3	203 61.7
ONLY PROFIT SHARE	2 100.0 1.3		2 .6
A WEEK OF VACATIONS A YEAR	1 100.0 .7		1 .3
PROFIT SHARING LOANS AND PRIVATE PHYSICIAN		1 100.0 .6	1 .3
ONLY LOANS		2 100.0 1.1	2 .6
COLUMN TOTAL	153 46.5	176 53.5	329 100.0

MISSING CASES = 2

benefits stipulated by law, 16.5% were only enrolled in the *IMSS*, 2.3% had some benefits, such as occasional loans, absence permit, etc.; but almost a third of the interviewed workers of legal enterprises (32.4%) were counted as not having a single

fringe benefit (Table No. 6). This means that they were hired illegally since in Mexico every worker should be registered at the *IMSS* when hired. Furthermore, using fringe benefits to estimate the type of worker (home-based or factory) the prediction improves 63%, highlighting close relationships between the two variables.

The recorded data shows that even when subcontracting was the most commonly used mechanism to face the crisis, lowering wages and overlooking worker's fringe benefits conformed a structural part of the contractual relationships within garment factories in Yucatan.

In a case study carried out in a large factory of Merida during 1987-88, 17.85% of its 55 workers were under 16 years old. From the total workers only 9.09% received at least a full minimum wage, 40% less than the 80% of the mentioned salary, 38.18% less than 60% of the minimum wage and 12.72% less than 30% of the legal salary (Falla, 1992).

Among factory workers, it is difficult to establish if there was or not segregation regarding wages. Grouping factories according to their size (number of employees), there is great standard deviation within each group (Table No. 7). Thus, wage variation in all large, medium, small factories and specially sweatshops is immense.

According to Norusis (1986:259), even if there are notorious differences between the means of the groups, these differences are not statistically significant if there is much variation within the groups. This is precisely the case with factory garment workers in the sample. However, it can be said that in average wages drop from larger to smaller business and that the standard deviation shows that salaries are more to less stable following the same trend.

Considering fringe benefits (Table No. 8), the prediction improves 10% if size of the factory is used to determine the conditional distribution of fringe benefits. Thus, both variables have some association.

In the sample (1985-86) of the 41 workers working in large factories, 65.9% had all the legal fringe benefits, of the 88 workers laboring in medium enterprises 51.1% and within the 24 small business 45.8%. Inversely, the smallest proportion of those who did not were getting fringe benefits was found in large factories (19.5%), the proportion augmented in the medium-sized factories (26.1%) and the highest figures were found in small business (41.7%).

TABLE No. 7.
MEAN WAGES IN FACTORIES ACCORDING SIZE.

	MEAN	S.D.	n=
ALL THE POPULATION	24,645.70	8,164.94	99
LARGE FACTORIES	25,895.53	6,727.01	22
MEDIUM FACTORIES	25,718.85	7,921.20	56
SMALL FACTORIES	23,061.60	7,034.57	9
SWEATSHOPS	19,055.75	10,633.04	11
GARMENT STORES	12,800.00	000.00	1

TOTAL CASES = 115
MISSING INFORMATION = 16

These figures make clear that even if the proportions are not the same in all the three groups, in large, medium-sized and small garment factories there were sectors of workers to whom fringe benefits granted by law were not given.

Under these circumstances, a substantial part of the burden the crisis represented was transferred to the workers, especially, although not exclusively, to the

home-based ones. Contracted personnel in "formal" enterprises were also affected through illegal and clandestine labor relations.

TABLE No. 8.
FRINGE BENEFITS BY SIZE OF THE FACTORY.
(FACTORY WORKERS).

FRINGE BENEFITS	LARGE	MEDIUM-SIZED	SMALL	SWEAT-SHOP	STORE	LINE TOTAL
ALL	27 30.7 65.9	45 51.1 51.1	11 12.5 45.8	5 5.7 26.3		88 50.9
ONLY IMSS	6 22.2 14.6	17 63.0 19.3	3 11.1 12.5	1 3.7 5.3		27 15.6
NONE	8 14.5 19.5	23 41.8 26.1	10 18.2 41.7	13 23.6 68.4	1 1.8 100.0	55 31.8
PROFIT SHARE, LOANS & PRIVATE PHYSICIAN		1 100.0 1.1				1 .6
LOANS		2 100.0 2.3				2 1.2
COLUMN TOTAL	41 23.7	88 50.9	2 13.9	19 11.0	1 .6	173 100.0

Inside the Yucatecan urban-popular sectors women going into waged work has been part of a more complex survival strategy which has been developed by impoverished urban sectors to face the current decline of their already previous low living standards due to the sisal crisis. The national economic crisis and the recently established SAPs have caused the decrease in formal employment, favoring

unemployment and sub-employment. Also there has been a severe loss of purchasing power due to a strict salary control, inflation has been high and government has cut subsidies to services.

As stated before, to cope with these processes households have implemented diverse strategies such as adjustments of member's participation in the labor market, budget changes and the restructuring of daily life which includes an intensification of domestic work and changes in social life (Benería, 1992). It has also been reported that the inclusion in wage work of more and more members of poor families has been present (Benería, 1992; Duarte, 1989; González, 1986; Safa and Antrobus, 1992). In the Yucatan garment manufacturing, its two variants (factory and domiciliary work) was a very important source of employment for women because of its relatively easy access. Thus, the crisis was augmenting the need of searching for job hunting at the same time it was making working conditions more precarious.

Women within their Households and Women as Workers

Our data also highlight the relationships between the position of a woman within the household and the labor options presented to her in the garment manufacturing industry (Table No. 9). A woman's place in her co-resident groups assigned her a concrete identity; this identity is based on a collectively enforced kinship system and is not only accepted by women themselves, but by other household members and the overall society as well. A woman's kinship identity has a very important role determining her duties with domestic chores, child rearing responsibilities and obligations towards the household budget. It also positions a woman in an internal hierarchy, establishing who and when she should obey and who

and when she can command. Thus, women's position in the household became a key issue in understanding labor segregation in apparel manufacturing.

TABLE No. 9.
POSITION OF WORKERS IN THE HOUSEHOLD
BY TYPE OF WORKER.

POSITION	HOME-BASED	FACTORY	TOTAL
DAUGHTERS	7 9.7 4.6	65 90.3 36.5	72 21.8
WIVES	6 50.0 3.9	6 50.0 3.4	12 3.6
WIVES AND MOTHERS	126 65.6 82.4	66 34.4 37.1	192 58.0
HOUSEHOLD HEADS	13 24.5 8.5	39 75.5 22.5	52 16.0
SISTERS		2 100.0 .6	2 .3
XUM	1 100.0 .7		1 .3
COLUMN TOTAL	153 46.2	178 53.8	331 100.0

* For further analysis the *xum* (the lover, the second, the woman of the "*casa chica*"), as she identified herself, was merged with the wives and mothers.

Regarding the position of the workers in their households five categories resulted: daughters, sisters, wives, wives and mothers and household heads. Classified as daughters were the non main economic providers of their households,

single and without children, living with at least one of their parents.[18] Of all the home-based laborers there were 7 (4.6%) women and 65 (36.5%) factory employees who met the requirements of being assigned as "daughters." Hence, in apparel manufacturing daughters were segregated into factory labor. Ninety percent of all the women interviewed that were classified as daughters were working outside their homes.

Two single women without children were considered to be "sisters" because even if they were sharing the house with their brothers and sisters they had no co-resident parents. Both sisters were factory employees (1.12% of the total factory workers). The low frequencies registered for this arrangement demonstrates than in Yucatan single sons and daughters living without their parents are rare.

Considered as "wives" were married women without co-resident sons and daughters (either because they had not had them yet or because all their offspring had married and/or had left their family of origin). Wives were participating in low rates in the garment manufacturing working force. There were only 6 (3.9%) home-based workers and 6 (3.4%) factory laborers in this group. Thus, for the reason that would be analyzed in Chapter 7, wives were almost excluded from the garment manufacturing work force.

The above shows that in Yucatan women work for a wage if it is economically necessary, but they hardly even participate in the labor market if the family's income is sufficient to pay for household expenses. Thus, these figures point into the conclusion that the "traditional" sexual division of labor still dominates in Yucatan.

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[18]As will be discussed in Chapter No. 9, single women who were main economic providers of their households and/or single mothers were classified as household heads.

Classified as wives and mothers were the workers who have a co-resident spouse and at least a single son or daughter sharing the household with them. Wives and mothers predominated in home-based labor by a ratio 2:1 (127:65 or 65.6%:34.4%). Within 127 the home-based workers they outnumber all the other categories (83.0%). However, it is important to highlight that in the factory laborers group their number (65) and their proportion was as important as that of daughters' (36.5%). Hence, the strategy of multiple wage earners households to face the crisis is clearly present and married women with children are participating actively.

Household heads were single mothers, separated or divorced workers living with at least a single co-resident son, or daughter who were their household's main economic providers. Seventy five percent of the 53 household heads were working in factories. From the sample of 13 home-based workers only 8.5% were in this category (without any single mothers), but within the 40 factory workers they represented nearly a fifth of the women interviewed (22.5%). Therefore, the need for a better wage to sustain the family and the chance to get fringe benefits pushed the household heads into the factories.

The value of Lambda (.39869) demonstrates that by knowing the position of the workers in their households the prediction of the conditional distribution of being home-based or factory laborers improves 40%. This denotes a close relationship between the two variables and highlights the close relationships between the domestic and the productive spheres.

From the 331 workers interviewed 192 (58%) were wives and mothers indicating that despite the fact that the Yucatecan society is quite traditional, women's roles are being redefined.

Obviously, family ties and the family life cycle have undeniable repercussions on the number of waged workers in the family and the proportion ratio among wage earners and economically dependent members. Also the number and age of the offspring of married women, presence or absence of other women to share housework as well as family's networks condition the labor option for women. However, the vulnerability of married women with small children living in nuclear family units is evident, causing them to easily accept insecure job options with poor labor conditions, low pay and no fringe benefits. The vulnerability of women with the above mentioned socio-demographic characteristics was a major factor in the flexibilization of garment industry labor during the crisis.

It was easy for local entrepreneurs to establish a model of economic expansion based on the use of the home-based female labor force and to hire factory workers outside the law. It is true that entrepreneurs seeing a shortage in their exports, were unable to modernize their industrial plant as they faced the higher costs of machinery, maintenance and raw materials, but they found a large impoverished female population who was willing to work for very low salaries and no fringe benefits.

Age and Type of Worker

Age and education are associated with women's position in the household. For example, one can expect daughters to be younger and more educated. Seventy eight percent of the 50 women between 16 and 20 years old and 35% of the 46 between 21 and 25 were daughters. Furthermore, half (54.2%) of all daughters were between 16 and 20 years old. Seventy five percent of the wives were between 16 and 30 years old. Wives and mothers predominated in the age group from 21 to 50.

TABLE No. 10.
AGE GROUPS BY POSITION IN THE HOUSEHOLD.

AGE GROUPS	DAUGH TER	ONLY WIVE	WIVES & MOTHER	H.H. HEAD	SISTER	XUM	ROW TOTAL
15 OR LESS	3 100.0 4.2						3 .9
16-20	39 78.0 54.2	3 6.0 25.0	6 12.0 3.1	2 4.0 3.8			50 15.1
21-25	16 34.8 22.2	3 6.5 25.0	19 41.3 9.9	8 17.4 15.1			46 13.9
26-30	10 15.6 13.9	3 4.7 25.0	40 62.5 20.8	10 15.6 18.9		1 1.6 100.0	64 19.3
31-35	2 2.8 2.8	1 1.4 8.3	60 1.4 8.3	8 11.3 15.1			71 21.5
36-40	2 3.4 2.8		42 72.4 21.9	13 22.4 24.5	1 17 100.0		58 17.5
41-45		1 4.5 8.3	15 68.2 7.8	6 27.3 11.3			22 6.6
46-50			9 69.2 4.7	4 30.8 7.5			13 3.9
51-55			1 50.0 .5	1 50.0 1.9			2 .6
56-60		1 50.0 8.3		1 50.0 1.9			2 .6
COLUMN TOTAL	72 21.8	12 3.6	192 58.0	53 16.0	1 .3	1 .3	331 100.0

Taken together all the wives and mothers, 31% were between 31 and 35 years old. Household heads' ages varied from 16 to 60 years old, predominating in the age group between 36 and 40 (Table No. 10). The association of age and position in the household differs by type of worker. Within the 153 home-based workers using age to calculate the conditional distribution of position in the household the prediction improves 11.0% (n=7). The fact that in this group of workers wives and mothers predominated (127) with respect to daughters (7), wives (6) and household heads (13) is reflected in this figure.

Within the 178 factory laborers the same prediction improves 36%, showing an association between the two variables. In this group there are almost as many daughters (65) as wives and mothers (65) and household heads (40) and the sample is large. Using age itself to predict the type of worker the estimation improves 40%.

Women younger than 25 worked at higher rates in factories; 47% of the factory laborers were in this age group. Those between 26 and 50 tended to labor in a home-based fashion; 88% of all domiciliary piece workers were in this age group, although almost half of the factory workers were also in this group. Few women remain in the labor market beyond 50-years-old and after this age group there was no pattern discernable. These frequency distribution made clear that, as the garment entrepreneurs themselves recognized, they were not taking age into account when hiring women.

Education and Women's Position in the Household

The relationship between educational level and a women's position in the household was not clear (Table No. 12). When educational level is known, the

TABLE No. 11.
EDUCATION BY POSITION IN THE HOUSEHOLD.

LEVEL EDUC.	DAUGH TER	WIFE	WIFE & MOTHER	H.H. HEADS	SIS TER	*XUM*	ROW TOTAL
ILLITE RATE			16 76.2 8.3	4 19.0 7.7		1 4.8 100.0	21 6.4
INCOM GRADE	16 10.6 22.2	3 2.0 25.0	101 66.9 52.6	30 19.9 57.7	1 .7 100.0		151 45.8
COMP GRADE	25 27.2 34.7	6 6.5 50.0	48 52.2 25.0	13 14.1 25.0			92 27.9
INCOM MIDDLE	19 55.9 26.4	2 5.9 16.7	11 32.4 5.7	2 5.9 3.8			34 10.3
COM MIDDLE	6 40.0 8.3	1 6.7 8.3	7 46.7 3.6	1 6.7 1.9			15 4.5
COMM CAREER	1 16.7 1.4		5 83.3 6				6 1.8
TECH NICAL				1 100.0 1.9			1 .3
HIGH SCHOOL	4 50.0 5.6		3 37.5 1.6	1 12.5 1.9			8 2.4
PROFES SIONAL	1 100.0 1.4						1 .3
MORE MIDDLE			1 100.0 .5				1 .3
COLUMN TOTAL	72 21.8	12 3.6	192 58.2	52 15.8	1 .3	1 .3	330 100.0

MISSING CASES = 1

prediction improves only an 8%. Generally, educational levels were low, even if only 6% were recorded as illiterate, almost half (45.8%) had not finished grade school. These women, added to the 28% who only finished elementary school, made a total of 80% with a basic education or less. On the other hand, only 5% had studied for a technical or commercial career, attended high school or been involved in any higher education program. Even if low, this 5% highlights the few labor opportunities for women because even well-educated women became garment laborers.

Knowing educational level the prediction of type of workers got better only 13%. A tendency for factory workers to be better educated was observed, but this might be related to the fact that they were also younger. The levels of education confirmed that education was not a criteria for hiring women in the apparel industry. In both groups they had finished grade school or less.

Characteristics of Industrial Home-based Garment Manufacturing

Subcontracting has historically been utilized by apparel entrepreneurs as one of the most commonly used strategies to keep profit margins up under variable conditions. Thus, the "blurred factory" had been spreading around the city and the countryside because it had already proven its efficiency for garment businessmen. However, its presence had always been at the cost of labor instability, a lack of fringe benefits and low salaries for outworkers who, as discussed, have always been predominantly married women with children living in nuclear households. Now, subcontracting is increasing everyday throughout the country (although not in Yucatan), becoming one of the preferred means of augmenting the labor force "flexibility," a necessity for production in the current moment of capital accumulation.

> Calculations are that the cost of hand labor in the clothes manufacturing industry represents from 40% to 60% of the total cost of the finished product. The salaries of machine operators in the Third World represent 25% of those perceived by their counterparts from the OECD nations (Rush, 1984:180-181).

This shows how in order to sustain their profit margins during the crisis, national entrepreneurs have resorted to the subcontracting of clandestine workshops and domiciliary workers. It also explains why multinational companies establish their industrial plants beyond the boundaries of their own countries in search of lower costs for hand labor (Safa, 1981). Even when the technology for increasing productivity through constant capital investments already exists,[19] it is more profitable to intensify the usage of a female labor force which is highly skilled (although socially viewed as unskilled) and extremely cheap (Rush, 1984).

In this text industrial home-based work will stand for that in which the home of the outworkers actually becomes a part of the "blurred factory." In Merida, the predominant situation among home-based workers (1985-86) was one under which the worker used her[20] own tools[21] to accomplish only parts of the garment manufacturing process, not whole pieces.[22] One hundred and forty workers (91.5% of

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[19]Mainly using CAD programs for designing and cutting.

[20]Various men were detected working at their homes for the garment industry. They were mainly involved in *guayaberas* and slacks manufacturing. Also several couples were working jointly as outworkers. However, women predominated in this sector.

[21]Sewing machines, semi industrial sewing machines (Singer 20μ), used for straight stitches and also to embryoid. Tucking machines were also common.

[22]According to Alonso's (1990) classification, in Merida, home-based labor was taking place through "unipersonal shops." Clandestine "pluripersonal" sweatshops were not localized in their owner's homes and owners did not belong to the poor urban sectors of the population. Even some of the owners of legally established factories there owned clandestine sweatshops at the same time. Hence, they did not

the total interviewed) used their own tools; one used both the ones supplied and her own instruments; seven (5%) used machines borrowed from relatives and friends and five (3%) did not use machinery for their work.[23]

However, even though many home-based workers supplied the threads and needles used, paid for the needed electricity and for the repairs and maintenance of their machines, the fabric, which is the main raw material for garment manufacturing always belonged to the factory or workshop.[24] This raw material was acquired by the home-based workers in three basic ways:

a) An intermediary obtained the material directly from a main factory, a previously subcontracted factory, a sweatshop or a home-based worker, sometimes even with part of the tasks already done, and took it door by door to the outworkers' homes. He later on (usually a week) visited the laborer's home again, picked up the finished work, inspected it and paid the tasks done by the piece.

b) The home-based employees went to the factory to ask for and pick the cut up pieces of fabric, sewed them at home and delivered the finished work to the factory again, where they were also paid by the piece.

c) Some of the workers who went to the factories to get the needed materials redistributed them among their acquaintances, paying them by the piece, but paying

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use clandestinity as a strategy to obtain small profits, but to rather augment their huge earnings.

[23]Hand embroiderers, unstainers *(desmanchadoras)*, ironers, the ones cutting threads, etc.

[24]Already cut fabric, sometimes even with part of the production process already finished.

less than the factory wages, thus, becoming not only outworkers, but also intermediaries.

This final work distribution (c) allowed the distributors to earn an extra pay and their acquaintances to stay home to watch their house and their children. This situation was especially useful if the latter lived in nuclear family units and had small children.

In all cases the factory set the prices to be paid and the quality and quantity to be reached by the direct producers.[25] Hence, the capital clearly penetrated and controlled the production sphere through the relations of production that were established. For the outworkers, even if the working place had been displaced from the factory to their homes, their jobs still created surplus value and they were part of a capitalist form of production organization.

In Merida, outwork, especially that done for medium-sized and large factories, was strictly checked for quality. According to an interviewed worker who used to pick the pieces up directly at a factory, when a new model came out, she got a sample from the factory and completely sewed a single piece of that kind of garment, returning it when finished to a factory supervisor. The supervisor was the one who decided whether she could receive authorization to turn in a full lot of the garments. When she subcontracted neighbors or friends, she had to make sure they learned how to assemble the new piece perfectly since she was responsible to the factory for the lot.

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[25]In the factories work was strictly checked. Also the norm was to ask for defined weekly quotas. Because of this many women preferred to work through intermediaries.

In the case of a piece of clothing found to contain an error, the worker could either unsew the garment and redo it or turn it in without getting paid. This worker told me how she once opted for the second option and then she found her finished clothes for sale at a store. She knew they were hers because " one always recognizes one's work." When asked about these practices an intermediary said that poorly sewn pieces were sold at lower prices for popular consumption to "recover the costs at least."

As a result, these working conditions forced home-based workers to be extremely careful with their labor, making enormous efforts not to make mistakes or get the fabric dirty, all for a very low salary. These efforts were very difficult to accomplish, taking into account their home conditions. They sewed in their main room with kids hanging around and cooking and doing other domestic chores almost at the same time.

Furthermore, since with their working conditions the production and the reproduction spheres were not clearly limited and the labor of the average outworker was paid by the piece, home-based laborers turned into what Portes (1983) has called disguised wage workers. Under this situation women were assumed and assumed themselves to be self-employed. This identity created the circumstances leading to their being paid less than the legal minimum wage and eliminating their fringe benefits. Therefore, they were not assumed and did not assume themselves to be full-time or half-time workers with specific legal labor rights, but rather to be housewives "helping out" with the burden of the household budget.

Home-based Labor and Industrial Outwork

Industrial domiciliary work, typical of the garment, shoe making (de la Paz, 1988; Ypeji. 1993) and more recently even of electronics (Benería and Roldán, 1987), distinguishes itself from other forms of production given within the informal sector of economy as having the following characteristics:

a) The relations of production are determined by capital penetrating and controlling the sphere of domestic production. Thus, the direct worker (the one who transforms raw materials into products) creates surplus value.

b) The direct worker's home is transformed into an external department of the "blurred factory," but nevertheless remains part of a capitalist enterprise.

c) The relations of production through which the workers insert themselves into the productive process is as disguised wage workers.

Within the "pure" petty commodity production, workers make their goods throughout all the production stages with their own tools; they control the productive process and, finally, they introduce their finished goods into the market.

This "pure" model is transformed as the commercial capital appears between the production and the sale of manufactured items. This occurs when merchants buy articles from the direct producers and then resell them, as well as when agents or other producers act as intermediaries (Kriedte *et al.,* 1981:98-99).

The intervention of commercial capital between production and consumption gives place to an economic dependence of the producer on the trader. During the development of European capitalism, the literature refers to this system as kaufsystem (Kriedte *et al.,* 1981:99). Within this form of merchandise production and sale, the production sphere still follows the path of traditional petty commodity production, out

of the reach of capital. However, the circulation process is completely regulated by commercial capital laws. Hence, the kaufsystem gives certain independence to the petty producer. Also, its relationship to global society are not given through the generation of surplus value, but through unequal exchange. In Yucatan, garments, handcrafts and sometimes food production are done by either of the two economic processes described above.

Petty commodity production as well as a mechanism that resembles the kaufsystem were present in garment manufacturing and always linked to commercial capital. Some of the sewing workers interviewed bought the fabric, cut the pieces out and assembled the garments (sometimes subcontracting to family or friends), offering their production directly to salespeople in popular markets and/or clothing stores.

During the field work we also found cases of owners of clothing establishments who ordered the manufacture of certain garments and usually supplied the fabric to women who elaborated the completed items, from cutting to finishing (even sewing on the store's trade mark) and turning them in on the agreed to date.

Merida's informal economy is huge and very important. There are a large number of people selling personal services (part-time *-por día-* and full-time *-de planta-* maids, clothes washers, ironers, gardeners, car washers) as well as many involved in petty trade (selling of fruit, food, candy and other goods). Thus, still today shoe-making, shops for car repairing and painting, etc., are structured in any of the economic relations described above.

Besides, in the shantytowns one could still find many self-subsistence activities like the raising of animals (chickens, pigs) and the harvesting of fruits and other edible plants grown in backyards is fairly common. Even though some authors, such as

Portes (1988:10), include self-subsistence activities as an integral part of the informal economy. From my point of view, their economic status is different because they are not destined to generate income within the Latin American societies.

Industrial Home-based Labor and the Informal Economy

Why is home-based garment manufacturing categorized as part of the informal economy? This question naturally leads to another one. What characterizes informal economic activities?

There is agreement among authors that the label "informal economy" identifies income generating activities placed outside prevailing contractual norms. The gross majority of these activities are undertaken by the poorest strata of society since they require a very low investment and an unskilled labor force. (Portes *et al.*, 1988:prologue).[26]

However, according to Escobar (1990:24) "the key of informal economy is the absence of involvement from the State apparatus." On this point the major discussion revolves around the conceptual distinction between clandestinity and illegality (Escobar, 1990:26). For Escobar there are illegal situations which cannot be labeled clandestine because "they involve daily and frequent relation with the State and its agents." (Escobar, 1990:27). And,

> clandestine units operate . . . without the consent of the State. These units are therefore hidden and secret, they do not follow any legal lineaments and are not registered in any record

As for the small manufacturing shops he studied

[26]w/n stands for page without number.

> all but one were illegal although none was clandestine, even though they had been so through one or various stages, before having been detected by a government inspector. (Escobar, 1990:27)

According to Escobar,

> The distinction between illegality and clandestinity is important because, when it is said that the great majority of the informal economy works "illegally" . . . it is mistakenly assumed that this illegality implies the absence of any regulation by the State, raising the questions of what gives order and permanence to this economy if not the state and it is then wrongly concluded that informal units construct their own 'extra-legal normativity (Escobar, 1990:27)

Regarding the relations between the formal and the informal sectors in garment manufacturing and these with the state, at least in the social context here studied, the distinction between illegality and clandestinity emphasized by Escobar, does not follow the pattern he found in Guadalajara. In Merida, the 'illegal' activities of the sector remained hidden from the State, 'clandestine' even if they were not ignored by some of its agents.

It is true in Merida as in Guadalajara clandestinity worked openly, "in the light," and everybody knew about it. Through corruption entrepreneurs 'bought' state employees as informants who told them when official agents were going to inspect their factories. By these means illegal activities were not denounced to the proper offices. Thus, since illegal activities were never denounced the entrepreneurs did not face any legal sanctions.

However, I agree with Escobar that the state middle agents in fact promoted an 'informal' regulation of the law, even if they were "bought." Maybe their true role was to control, at least at a minimum, the abuses committed upon the workers. But from my point of view, clandestinity is different from illegality when the proper government offices and officials sanction the factory owners and stop the abuse. But

if the agents were silenced, the activities of the factories would officially remain clandestine.

I can assure that despite carefully reading the newspapers in search for news about the garment industry, receiving information from 331 apparel workers and having conversations with factory owners and middle men, I never discovered any actions which were carried out by the state to sanction illegal activities carried out by garment entrepreneurs.

In conclusion, I consider that in the majority of the cases 'illegality' and 'clandestinity' did correspond, at least in the Yucatecan apparel industry.[27] In fact, within the regional manufacture of garments illegality and clandestinity conformed a structural part of production organization. Officially registered factories employed people who were not legally hired, employed women under sixteen[28] and almost a third of the total factory workers were not enrolled in the official institution to protect their rights.[29] This shows that even among registered factories, illegal activities were constant. Furthermore, these activities remained

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[27]The only case I knew about official sanctions to a factory was in Motul de Carrillo Puerto, a town located in the sisal zone. In 1988 I carried out field work in a garment factory there. Few days before I got into the town a factory was sanctioned for violating the law. Women under 16 years old had to be fired and the female owner had to register the employees at the *IMSS*, which she had not done before. Because she did not have the economic capacity to pay the *IMSS* the respective quotas for all of the workers, she fired half of the laborers as well. However, the situation was provoked by the regional government's authority at the time, because he wanted to open his own garment factory. When some of the former workers were interviewed at their homes, several of them told me that they had already been contacted by this man, who had offered them a place in his factory. Thus, more than a real interest for the legal situation of the workers, he was using his political position to benefit himself.

[28]In Mexico the Federal Labor Law forbids the hiring of people under 16.

[29]The *Intituto Mexicano del Seguro Social.*

officially clandestine, although, again, they took place with some regulation by State's agents.

Because of the above, illegal interference from the government in the terms defined by Escobar, is not useful for forming a clear distinction between the registered factories and the not registered ones. This makes it evident that, at least in the case of this productive branch in Yucatan, it is more important to detect illegal practices, openly in conflict with the elementary rights of the workers, than to establish the precise limits of 'informality' or 'clandestinity' among these industries. In Mexico, industrial home-based labor is not outlawed in itself as it is, for example, in the United States. The FLL (Art. 317-321) regulates it. This Law establishes that employers who contract domiciliary workers must be registered in the "Register for Domiciliary Work Employers," which should include name, address and other information about the contractor. Working conditions must be stated in writing, with copies for the employee, the employer and the inspectors. The text should contain the name, nationality, sex, civil status and address of the worker as well of that of the entrepreneur; location of the work to be done; nature, quality and quantity of the jobs to be undertaken, amount of the salary to be paid, as well as the place and dates where the salary will be paid.

Besides this method of control, entrepreneurs are to keep a "Register of Home-Based Workers." This register should contain similar information as the State's registry, as well as: dates to pick up working materials and turn in finished work; a list of raw materials and tools given to the worker; the value of these tools and a register of objects lost or damaged by the worker.

Naturally, it is stipulated that tools, operation and repair costs are to be provided by the employing company, which should also provide its workers with health care and other fringe benefits indicated by law (vacation, profit sharing, maternity leaves, etc.).

In Yucatan domiciliary work became illegal and clandestine because employees did not observe the established labor norms, alleging they employed independent petty producers. In 1990 one of the garment entrepreneurs interviewed (then the president of the National Chamber for the Garment Industry of Yucatan) maintained, when asked, that "the ones following illegal procedures are the workers, as self-employed they should register officially and they accept working material without following this procedure."

Domiciliary work in industrial garment manufacturing must be considered as a part of an informal economy on the following grounds:

a) Although it is an income generating activity outside contractual relations, through subcontracting it becomes part of a capitalist industrial process.

b) It is carried out by the poorest urban sectors (in this case females) as disguised wage workers.

c) It is accessible work, requires a low initial investment (although sewing machines are now expensive, the suburban population commonly had already acquired them and they are also available through monthly payments) and aside from embroidery (which many Mayan women traditionally learned as children, Rejón, 1992), low skill levels are needed.

d) It is a clandestine activity which considerably lowers variable capital costs for industry and even though this practice is widely known, no report of any

government's sanction on an entrepreneur for subcontracting home-based workers without following the norms established by Federal Labor Law has been found.

It is a fact that the expansion and contraction of domiciliary work, as well as its articulation with the global economy relates to the development cycles of capitalism. However, this form of production has always been present within the garment manufacturing industry. In Merida, according to descendants of former tailors, domiciliary manufacturing was common from the beginning of the century, when incipient serial production took place in tailor shops.

In some way, labor force flexibility through subcontracting of home-based workers historically required by this industry, has always been granted. Fundamentally, this is so because there have always been pauperized rural and urban sectors. Some women from families of these sectors, by having small children and living in nuclear family units, become extremely vulnerable to having to undertake domestic work and waged activities without leaving their homes.

Organization of Garment Production in Yucatan

In general terms, the process of garment production consists of three main stages: Pre-assembling, assembling and finishing. Pre-assembling can itself be divided into three stages: Design, pattern-making and foiling. After the design each garment is separated into its component parts, patterns are elaborated by sizes to be later used for tracing and cutting up. Afterwards, separate parts are grouped by size and color and the center of necks, cuffs and sleeves are marked with an iron to facilitate the assembling. The cloth represents from 40 to 50% of the garment's total cost; therefore it is very important not to waste the material. An experienced cutter

with an electric cutter is expected to make use of 80 to 90% of the total. It is interesting to note that almost all cutters are men.

Assembling is carried out though two steps: pre-sewing and mounting, which together form the actual sewing of the clothing. Pre-sewing consists of the separate assembling of necks, cuffs, etc. generally with overlocks and straight-sewing machines. Embroidering and tucking, when necessary, are also steps within the pre-sewing process. Home-based embroidering is usually carried out by workers using their great ability and a semi-industrial machine (Singer 20u). Common sewing-machines are also used, although in this case the embroidery becomes much slower. Updated factories have started using programmed automatic embroidering machines with twenty or more heads each. The worker's job when using these machines consists of checking the machines always have enough thread and are continuously working.

Assembling is the stage where the pre-sewn pieces are put together. This results in a complete item of clothing. Assembling is usually done with an overlock machine which, aside from sewing the parts together on a straight stitch, also makes zig-zag stitches on the cloth, so it does not unravel.

The total number of operations required in the making of clothing varies depending upon the garment to be elaborated. The decentralization of these operations changes according to the infrastructure and labor organization norms prevalent in each factory or subcontracted factories. Highly decentralized factories usually do not require their operators to undertake more than three chores, resulting in higher production speed, but repetitive, monotonous, tedious and boring working

conditions. Within rudimentary factories a single worker may carry out many operations and even complete fully assembled garments.

Due to the job description, it is not strange that assembling workers were mostly women. On one side, sewing activities were mostly culturally considered to be "feminine" and, on the other, assemblers constitute the largest working group within garment factories and women were the cheapest available hand labor.[30]

Finishing includes activities such as the sewing on of buttons, buttonholing, unstaining if necessary, ironing and packing. It is not until the packing and transportation stages when men again predominate.

The way production is organized in a factory depends on its size and infrastructure. As a general rule it is recommended that a single worker specialize in a single activity and that, when possible, assembly-lines work is used. In large and medium-sized factories several production lines exist, each of them sometimes elaborating specific garments. A supervisor, who continuously checks the work advance is assigned to each production line. Each line supervisor responds to a general supervisor.

In small factories and clandestine sweatshops only pre-assembling (which sometimes is not even done there), assembling (sometimes carried out by a single operator) and finishing (which may also be done by a single person or elsewhere) can be distinguished as stages.

Generally, aside from infinite variations, workers started a work day at 8 A.M. and went on without pause until one p.m., when they had 30 minutes off for lunch.

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[30]As has been discussed before, fabric represents a large percentage of the final garment.

TABLE No. 12.
TASKS INVOLVED IN GARMENT MANUFACTURING
BY PLACE WHERE THEY WERE DONE.

	HOME-BASED	FACTORY	ROW TOTAL
PRE-ASSEMBLING:			
DESIGNING		1 100.0 .6	1 .3
TRACING PATTERNS		1 100.0 .6	1 .3
MARKING THE MIDDLE OF SLEEVES, NECKS		3 100.0 1.7	3 .9
CLASSIFYING PIECES BY SIZES		2 100.0 1.1	2 .6
PRE-SEWING			
TUCKING	15 55.6 9.8	12 44.4 6.7	27 8.2
ADJUSTING		2 100.0 1.1	2 .6
SEWING OF SPECIAL PARTS		4 100.0 2.2	4 1.2
OTHER SEWING ACTIVITIES	4 25.0 2.6	12 75.0 6.7	16 4.8
LOOKING AFTER EMBROIDERING MACHINE		1 100.0 .6	1 .3

TABLE No. 12 (CONTINUED...)

	HOME-BASED	FACTORY	ROW TOTAL
EMBROIDERING	33 82.5 21.6	7 17.5 3.9	40 12.1
HAND SEWING	2 66.7 1.3	1 33.3 .6	3 .9
ASSEMBLING			
SEWING SIDES		13 100.0 7.3	13 3.9
ASSEMBLING	82 48.8 53.6	86 51.2 48.3	168 50.8
EMBROIDERING AND ASSEMBLING	5 100.0 3.3		5 1.5
MAKING WHOLE GARMENTS	10 76.9 6.5	3 23.1 1.7	13 3.9
FINISHING			
BUTTONHOLING (MACHINE)		1 100.6 .6	1 .3
HEMMING (MACHINE)		1 100.0 .6	1 .3
THREAD CUTTING	1 25.0 .7	3 75.0 1.7	4 1.2

TABLE 12 (CONTINUED...)			
	HOME-BASED	FACTORY	ROW TOTAL
PLACING BUTTONS AND BUTTONHOLING (MACHINE)		7 100.0 3.9	7 2.1
IRONING	1 16.7 .7	5 83.3 2.8	6 1.8
UNSTAINING		1 100.0 .6	1 .3
			PACKING
PACKING		1 100.0 .6	1 .3
OTHER ACTIVITIES			
"JOKER" WORKER		4 100.0 2.3	4 .3
SUPERVISING		3 100.0 1.7	3 .9
GENERAL SUPERVISION		4 100.0 2.2	4 1.2
COLUMN TOTAL	153 46.2	178 53.8	331 100.0

Factories seldom had eating facilities and because of the prices and short time available, workers usually brought their own lunch. The work day usually ended at 18

Hrs. Work at factories with an average work day of 43.5 hours per week is clearly past the 40 hours stipulated by the FLL.

In 1985-86 factories almost always paid by the piece. Everyday work was counted and recorded by the supervisor. A production quota was not required, but the slower laborers worked, the less they got paid. Supervisors were usually experienced workers with years in the factory and they earned better wages. They also check for workers did not talk or go to the restrooms too often. In the productive process, they transferred the materials from one worker to another and provided workers with needles, lace, thread and other materials, therefore controlling the use of material as well. All of these activities usually caused machinery workers to dislike them.

From the interviews it may be concluded that pre-assembling activities took place within the factories. In the pre-sewing stage, embroidering and tucking were the typical chores done at home. Embroidering along with mounting were the most common home-based activities. Finishing practices usually took place at the factory with little support required from home-based workers.

Table No. 13 shows the number of factory or domiciliary workers according to the main activity involved.

The Relationships Between Home-based Workers and Factories

It is hard to precisely describe the specific organization of "diffuse factories" in Yucatan. Hidden mechanisms of the production and the subcontracting' network can only be partially detected through multiple interviews with the workers. The workers start revealing the "secrets" of the factory only after they see someone they can trust

in the interviewer. On the contrary, intermediaries are always cautious and suspicious and, therefore, are very careful when answering. As they know, they are key factors in structure of the underground industry. During the research it was also important to become familiar with the names of the main garment entrepreneurs. Through this, identifying kinship relations among legal-factory and clandestine-tailorshop owners became possible, as well as establishing co-ownerships between legal factories and clandestine industries. Also, the usage of home manufacturing from part of the same business person was made evident.

In Merida as in many cities of the country the industrial garment plant is extremely heterogeneous. There are all-integrated factories, capable of handling the complete process of production from designing to packing without resorting to subcontracting. There are also semi-integrated factories, sufficiently well-equipped for assembling and one other activity: designing, cutting or finishing. Finally, there are non-integrated factories which are capable of only performing sewing activities.

It is true that an all-integrated factory can carry out the whole production process within its boundaries; however, during 1985-86 this only occurred in large, well-established industries, and even these resorted to subcontracting as the most practical solution when demand overwhelmed its production capabilities. As a norm, semi-integrated production plants manufactured for other factories and also commissioned other industries to manufacture for them. Non-integrated industries, as they only have sewing capabilities, (from my experience) almost exclusively manufacture for other industries.

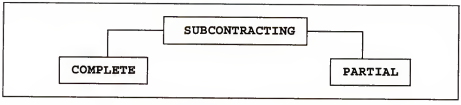

FIGURE No. 1. Subcontracting links.

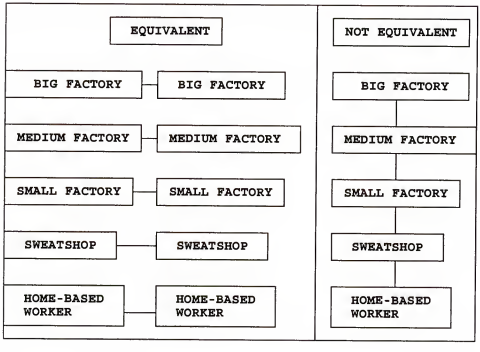

FIGURE No. 2. Equivalent and not-equivalent subcontracting links.

Just as Ypeij (1993) found in Perú, total subcontracting (given when complete pieces of clothing are involved), as well as partial subcontracting (when only a part of the producing process is commissioned) were found in the course of the present research.

The research conducted by Ypeij also reported that subcontracting could also be distinguished when they were given between industries of equivalent or similar

production capabilities, called equivalent subcontracting and when the subcontracting was found among factories of different potentials, generally better equipped industries subcontracting to more rudimentary ones or even resorting to home-based manufacturing, called non equivalent subcontracting. The latter subcontracting form is found to be markedly hierarchical, with a mirror image in Yucatan. Like Ypeij's, the present research showed that:

> non equivalent subcontracting many times is given though a pyramidal structure, i.e., a large industry subcontracts smaller industries, which themselves subcontract smaller industries, going through small and micro-industries and finally reaching home-based workers (networks generally structured by intermediaries). (Ypeij, 1993:4)

In Yucatan when subcontracting takes place, the subcontracting company makes itself responsible for the quality of the manufactured products. The client, obviously, does not know of the subcontracting and the products show the subcontracting-industry's trademark.

Technical imbalances among industries encourage subcontracting: small tailor shops that do not have tuckers may resort to home-based manufacturing or other establishments to cover their deficiency.

Most commonly large industries are all-integrated factories, which, even if they resort to others for manufacturing, never manufacture for other companies. Diffuse factories also take other forms; sometimes owners of legally registered factories also own clandestine sweatshops located in poor neighborhoods. Besides the obvious capital savings accrued through lower salaries and no fringe benefits, sweatshops offer entrepreneurs an excellent system for sub-invoicing the real production, therefore saving large sums of money through tax evasion.

Sometimes industries also become "blurred" within the factory, as a case found in downtown Merida shows. This company hid part of its production plant disguising it as storage rooms. When necessary, i.e., inspection checks or visits social security authorities', the owner even locked that part of the sweatshop with the workers inside.

There was another case found of an entrepreneur whose total installed infrastructure was reduced to a storage house. All the production was carried out though subcontracting. This entrepreneur had owned a factory, but after having labor conflicts with his workers he declared bankruptcy, sold all his machinery and organized his whole production though an intricate network of manufacturing subcontracts. He was very proud of the "ability" he displayed in solving this labor mishap.

As a part of the diffuse factory we shall also mention a large number of clandestine sweatshops, intermediaries and home-based workers. In the most common pattern all these structures converge in a certain factory; designing, cutting, marking and tucking take place. The pieces, ready for assembling, have many different possible destinations. Sometimes they are assembled in the same factory; sometimes they go into another equivalent factory or into a non- integrated one; they may also end up in a clandestine sweatshop or with a home manufacturer. The unfinished garments follow these routes into the hands of intermediaries who may depend on the subcontracting company as well as on the subcontracted one and they may also be "independent." The material may be worked on as it goes from one sweatshop to another and then on to the homes of home-based workers or maybe it just goes to the last ones.

Other times certain parts of the clothing get delivered for specific tasks to be performed on them, i.e., embroidery and tucking. This may take place at a worker's home or in some illegal tailor shop. From 1985 to 1986 certain activities, such as the elaboration of tucking shreds for *guayaberas*, paid by the meter, could also be commissioned out to home workers. Then they were taken to the factories to be sewn on the actual garments or they could again be delivered, together with the *guayaberas*, to other domiciliary workers for them to sew on.

The diffuse factory was expanding through the city, reaching even the countryside. Its networks were intricate and extremely flexible; it could almost be said that they perpetually adjusted to the varying volume of clothes to be produced, due to the fluctuations in demand. Without pretending to exhaust the unlimited number of possible combinations of arrangements among all-integrated, semi-integrated and .

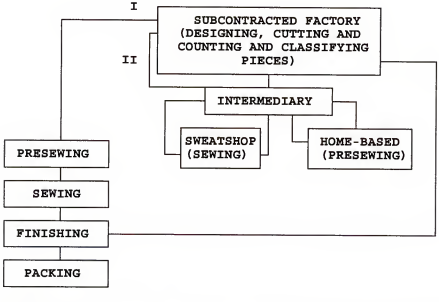

FIGURE No. 3. Relationships between the formal and the informal sectors, Case No. 1.

non-integrated factories, intermediaries, clandestine sweatshops and domiciliary workers, the following diagrams describe four cases commonly found into the production process under subcontracting

Figure No. 3 illustrates the organization of part of the production within a medium all-integrated factory. A fraction of the request gets done within the limits of the factory (I); another part was given out for manufacturing through an intermediary (II), who reckons himself independent. Pre-sewing stages were delegated among diverse home-based workers and afterwards they were picked up by the same intermediary and taken to a clandestine sweatshop for assembling. Finally they were brought back to the factory for finishing and packing.

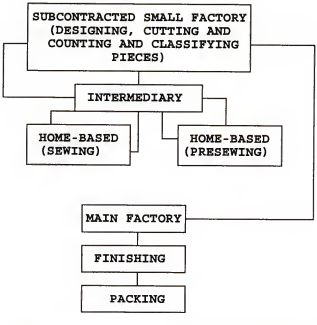

FIGURE No. 4. Relationships between the formal and the informal sectors, Case No. 2.

Figure No. 4 shows the case of a special request made of a small factory. Another independent intermediary made it possible for this request to be met by separating the pre-sewing and sewing stages through domiciliary workers. These stages were divided because an *overlock* machine was needed to close them. Once again the finishing (which required button and buttonhole machines) as well as the packing, was done in the factory.

Figure No. 5 illustrates the chain between two equivalent factories when one is to manufacture a whole request of the second. The subcontracted industry

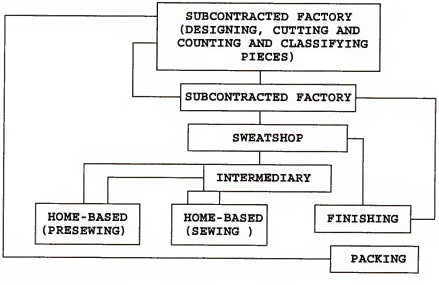

FIGURE No. 5. Relationships between the formal and the informal sectors, Case No. 3.

subcontracts a smaller tailor shop which, again, does not manufacture the garments; instead it sends them to an "independent" intermediary, who delivers them to domiciliary workers. The intermediary then takes the garments back to the sweatshop where the finishing is done, allowing the sweatshop to deliver the complete garments

to the subcontracted factory. Finally, the clothes are sent back to the first factory which packs them and meets the deadline.

Figure No. 6 sketches the case of a home-based worker who weekly goes to a factory to pick up work. She distributes part of this work between two neighbors. The pre-sewing and sewing stages are completed at the women's homes and are then taken back to the factory by the same worker. The factory uses its own resources for finishing and packing of the lot.

This manner of organizing garment production is different from that found in the metropolitan area of Mexico City and so are the formal-informal sectors'

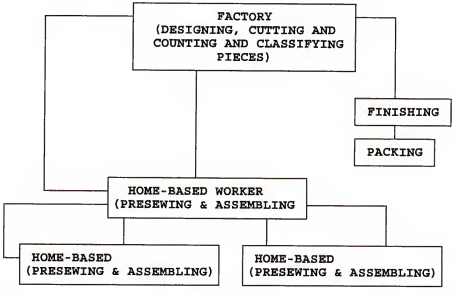

FIGURE No. 6. Relationships between the formal and the informal sectors, Case No. 4.

interconnections given there. In Nezahualcóyotl City, small female entrepreneurs are the ones who organize and control home-based labor; usually they have a few sewing machines in their homes and hire other women, who live nearby. These small

entrepreneurs are, in fact, forced to work clandestinely as a means of avoiding paying taxes and guaranteeing for themselves a small profit margin. They are subcontracted by large legal factories, owned by national millionaires and multinational corporations, which severely underpay their production. However, these legal factories do not participate in the organization, distribution and control of home-based labor. Thus, in apparel production, in Mexico City the picture of two fairly autonomous sectors (formal-informal) that interrelate through an unequal exchange association, may, indeed, be useful for the analysis.

Benería and Roldán (1987) also researched industrial home-based production in Mexico City. They pictured a clear subcontracting chain that goes from multinational corporations to outworkers (Figure No. 7). In this chain, the links between the illegal sweatshops that hire few workers and use the putting-out system and the national legal enterprises that subcontract their work, constitute the place where the formal and the informal sectors interrelate. However, their research did not include only garment production. Whether the connections between the formal and the informal sector vary between different branches of economic activities in the secondary sector, is still unknown. Benería's and Roldán's sample included the production of plastics (25.4%) electroelectronic parts (14.9%), consumer durable goods (I4.9%0), other (toys, food and the decoration of glass and plastic containers, I3.4%), metal (11.9%), garment-textiles (10.5%) and cosmetics (8.9%). They found that close to 70% of home-based production ended up in multinational corporations through the chain of subcontracting. However, it has to be taken into account that garment manufacturing for exportation relies not only on cheap prices, but also on a very high quality of fabrics and labor, to be able to compete in a tough international market. Therefore, at least in Yucatan,

subcontracting was not a practice among garment multinational enterprises that have been established there since 1984.

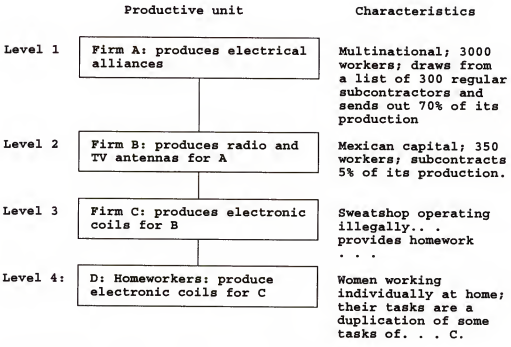

FIGURE NO. 7. Typical subcontracting chain. (Benería and Roldán, 1987:34).

At diffuse factories in Yucatan, hence, relationships between both formal and informal sectors of economy are constant and continuous given, as pointed out, at many levels. Illegality, as seen, permeates both sectors. The dichotomous vision of two relatively independent sectors, (however, involved in a close relationship) greatly simplifies the large variety of ties detected. Moreover this way of seeing things establishes illegality as a structural trait of the garment manufacturing industry, no matter which economic "sector" (formal or informal) is being studied.

The incontrovertible truth is that 8.7 hours workdays, are more than what is legally established and workers are not given the established minimum wage. There

are also employees who are under 16 years of age, another violation of national labor laws and large contingents of workers either working without contracts or not having Social Security. Domiciliary work is far from the model established by the Federal Labor Law and resorting to clandestine sweatshops is extremely common, often as hidden branches of legally registered companies. As a result of the findings discussed above, one can conclude that more than revealing a problem of informality-formality, these findings show that the dynamism and success of garment manufacturing as a profitable industry, in part because of the acute economic crisis, are due in a high degree to the worker-damaging illegal operations used.

In summary: Garment manufacturing in Yucatan was organized basically through "diffuse factories" with a broad range of working conditions. In general, this working conditions got worse for large, medium, small factories, sweatshops and home-based labor. However, illegality was present throughout the local industry. Wages lower than the minimum legal, lack of contracts, lack of fringe benefits and long workdays were found in formal enterprises. Labor segregation was clear in this economic branch and women's life courses captured through their position in the household was the main variable in determining women's labor preferences.

The average income for both, home-based and factory apparel workers was below the one legally established by Mexico's government. Poor working conditions and low salaries might be playing a role in women's primary identification as real or potential wives and mothers. Under these circumstances it might be more attractive for women to remain as housewives if possible, rather than working long hours for such a low wage.

CHAPTER 4
CASE STUDIES IN THE FACTORIES

Introduction

This Chapter constitutes the last one of the first part of the analysis. So far, the general economic dynamics of Mexico and Yucatan and the organization of the garment industry in the state have been analyzed in a broad perspective. The aim of this Chapter is to capture closely how women live their everyday working days using concrete factories as case studies. It is of interest to highlight how the personal relations in the factories are arranged between workers and between owners, managers, supervisors and workers. The intend is to take an anthropological look to women's working environment because it plays a very important role in shaping their identities. Statistically averaging work days, salaries, worker's ages, etc. means that this anthropological view of what life in the local garment factories is like, to a certain point, is lost. Case studies are helpful to overcome the above limit.

According to the records of the Regional Office of the National Chamber of the Garment Industry,[1] in Yucatan there were 129 registered garment factories employing 9,000 workers and producing 23,840,000 garments in 1985. There were 19 large, 61 medium and 49 small factories along with an undetermined number of clandestine sweatshops and home-based workers.

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[1]*Cámara Nacional de la Industria del Vestido, Delegación Yucatán.*

The infrastructure and working conditions of all these business varied a lot. During the field work, instead of dealing with previously selected few factories, efforts were made to contact the workers in the open population and get a better picture of what was going on in this economic branch. This was important because despite the fact of being a meaningful source of women's employment, no similar research focusing in the workers involved in this industry had been made before.

A Large Factory

The factory which motivated this case study was founded by a clothing merchant who became aware of a high demand for certain garments. He deduced that by manufacturing them himself, he could expand his profit margins. In 1976 he opened a small shop with 5 sewing machines and from 15 to 20 workers.

As this merchant had no competitors because most of the state's garment industry was dedicated to manufacturing *guayaberas*, his new business very rapidly became a success. Four years later, with the help of a bank loan, he expanded his factory to 40 machines and 60 workers. By this time he was not only fulfilling demands for feminine underwear in Yucatan, but he was also sending these products to Tabasco and the rest of the peninsula. In 1981 the same ex-merchant established a new industry under a different registry and at a different location. This new industry was opened to organize the embroidering stage, as well as the manufacturing of other articles needed for production.

Shortly after his success became solid enough in Southeast Mexico, this man started thinking about exporting his merchandise. During 1982-83 his industry manufactured products for "K-mart," an important American commercial chain, but the

results were unsatisfactory. Some time later, in 1986, he attended a fashion show in the United States to get acquainted with new styles. During this trip he figured out the production organization his factory still uses today. By 1991 he was exporting 90% of his production, although he did not commercialize it. Instead, he contracted distributors in the United States and Mexico City to take care of this for him.

The method used by this company for the production and commercialization of merchandise is outlined as follows:

1.- A professional American designer in the United States was paid by the Mexican company.

2.- The factory elaborated samples of these designs and sent them to national and international distributors. Their manufacture made use of 90% national resources and 10% imported materials.

3.- Distributors chose sizes, colors, fashions and the number of garments they would pay for.

4.- The factory met the distributor's requests.

5.- Distributors, independently of the factory, elaborated a catalog, paying professional models and photographers and used it to promote sales among chains such as "J.C. Penny's" in North America and "*El Puerto de Liverpool*," "*El Palacio de Hierro*" and "*Suburbia*" in Mexico.

Foreign demand for garment production (this company will soon be exporting to Spain and Germany through the same system) caused this factory produce clothes that could not be fashionable for more than two years. Executives explained that they consulted centers specialized in fashion tendencies in New York and other places. In the international market at the time of this interview (September, 1991), the 1993

Spring production was being decided. International commercial corporations already had contracted world-wide manufacturers for the production for two fashion seasons in 1992.

The system described above has meant commercial success for the analyzed company. The factory has grown rapidly; it is one of the largest in the state of Yucatan with 180 machines and 270 workers. Furthermore, an expansion is been planned in two years.

In this factory as elsewhere within the garment industry, gender segregation is deeply rooted. Managerial positions, cutting, mechanical repairing, packing and transporting are all male-dominated fields whereas sewing, and janitorial services are performed by women.

The departments and number of employees per department are as follows:

Out of the 10 administrative posts men occupy the three managerial positions: General Director, Production Manager and Administrative Manager; women are all secretaries.

The assembly section is made up of six workshops. Each workshop manufactures different garments and even though each worker performs a different task, assembling-line organization is not used in strict sense. Each workshop has a female supervisor and a female assistant who physically distributes working material among workers to speed labor. For instance, when workers need working material, they place a flag on their machine and wait for the assistant to bring them what they need.

Labor Conditions Prevailing in the Factory

The remarkable success of the factory reflects the labor conditions. The immense majority of factories in Yucatan are old houses located in downtown Merida. However, on 1988, this factory constructed its own building specifically to its own needs. It is located in the south of the city where the small secondary pre-sewing materials factory was founded. Nowadays even when both factories share the same location, their registries remain different for tax management.

Interviewed workers established that from the day they entered they were legally contracted and placed under Social Security[2]. They have an option of working an hour more everyday and four on Saturdays; these hours are effectively paid as overtime. Their check shows the legal minimum wage, as the rest is paid with coupons so workers do not pay more taxes; they may contribute to a savings fund and there are economic inducements for workers who have worked longer at the factory. There is a case of a very efficient worker with time in the company who earned $ 250 000 pesos per week, an outrageous sum for a garment industry worker. Besides, for only $ 6 500 per week the factory provides workers with a meal.

According to the factory administration there are three salary levels for workers; manual workers are paid the legal minimum wage; recently employed workers, which may be considered as going through an apprenticing process, are given an intermediate salary between the general minimum wage and the professional minimum wage; and finally, long-time workers are reportedly given the professional legal minimum wage. It is important to point out that the professional minimum salary

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[2]Although this practice is legally obligatory, this should be considered extraordinary. Within the garment industry context these employment conditions are practically a privilege.

for workers should have been given to all garment workers. However, the norm was to overlook it at based the wages in the minimum legal salary for non-qualified laborers.

The administrators also acknowledged the lack of experienced hand labor as one of their main problems. One of the workshop laborers, a native of a town called Baca in Motul County, even mentioned that she was asked to contact skilled workers from her hometown to be hired by the factory, their transportation to Merida being paid for by the company. When the interviews were completed, twelve workers from Baca were working at the factory everyday.

The factory head stated that they try to offer good working conditions because, in his words "happy workers work better." We asked if they had problems with the turnover of personnel and in case they did, what caused it. The administrator answered that they never had this kind of problem with old-time workers and that workers who quit do it because sewing at the factory's level is hard to learn and newcomers who ruin a lot of material leave because they "feel ashamed."

The labor conditions of many other factories are by far inferior in wages and fringe benefits. It could be assumed that workers at this factory consider themselves privileged and would never abandon this job. In fact this does not happen. Why is this so?

Through many interviews with workers and former workers I have reached the following conclusions:

1.- Pressured by international market requirements and alignments, the factory imposes organizational systems of production that are not adequate to the

idiosyncracy of regional workers, which will be explained later on. This generates discontent among workers and results in an intensive turnover of personnel.

2.- An important part of the unfavorable working environment of the factory is caused by a productive reorganization which took place in the factory in 1988. As will be discussed, through this new model, workers hierarchies appeared, causing strife among them.

3.- The position of workers within their family units is very important to their identity as workers; specifically, daughters (60% of the factory's workers) may stay temporarily out of work since they are not directly responsible for the family budget.

The following is a description of the events these conclusions are based on.

Unequally Distributed Labor Benefits

Certainly the factory administration, parting from their logic, try to offer workers attractive working conditions for better job performance. However, the interviews with machine workers revealed that the mechanism through which these benefits are distributed conflicts with the expectations of workers as to how they should be treated.

The contradiction arises mainly from what workers see as an unclear criterion for assigning such incentives, therefore leading to the assumption that the distribution is unjust. These are crucial elements, not only causing a lessening in the positive effects of the mentioned proficiency rewards, but also helping create an unsatisfactory working environment, incompetence and vengeance.

The main causal factors are:

a) When the factory was to be relocated to the southern part of town the owner offered to have a bus travel from the downtown area to the factory, but he never kept

his promise. Many workers first waited for the bus to become a reality but quit the job after a while because it was both difficult and expensive to commute to the establishment[3]. A significant proportion of old workers and newcomers still travel long distances (some even come from nearby towns) and constantly spend a large portion of their salary on transportation. The fact that the company offers transportation facilities only to workers from Baca (a town located in Yucatan's sisal zone) creates resentment among the other workers.

b) The criteria used in the creation of three salary levels is not clear. Workers do not understand how they are assigned in one of the levels and cite many examples of how newcomers get paid more than experienced workers. This helps create competition and distrust among employees as well as feelings of injustice or superiority, depending on the case. A young worker, when asked how come she received the highest salary level, answered me "I don't know; I guess I was lucky."

c) Among the workers in general, but particularly among the more experienced ones, there is a great pride in being able to perform their jobs very well. All of them enjoy sewing very much and agreed that they had the activity not only for the salary it represented. Phrases like "whenever I see a piece of clothing I know exactly how to do it" or "I haven't had to unsewn a single garment yet" reveal the satisfaction they feel for being efficient.

However there is no recognition, either verbal or economic, for good workers. No bonuses for exceeding production quotas are provided since the workers are supposedly assigned to a salary level according to their skill and production rhythm.

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[3]In Merida, with one exception, all bus lines go from the different neighborhoods downtown and back, therefore it is necessary to take two buses to get to the factory.

Thus, mistakes are punished but there is no praise or economic stimulus for those who have efficiently and quickly accomplished their job for a long time. This causes them frustration.

d) Some of the women interviewed acknowledged the existence of other women who "got out of hand" and, as they have a set wage, went for water and to the restroom far too often. The answer from the factory was the placing of a poster by the water fountains that read "This place is not for chat. Do not take more than 2 minutes" and increased control on the breaks permitted the workers. The problem arises when the workers that do not abuse these permits consider the enforcement of these regulation unjust because of a few who are undisciplined.

e) Interviewed workers seemed to appreciate the inexpensive food provided by the factory; however, as there are many of them, the food line is very long and the last ones have almost no time to eat.

f) After an exhausting workday of ten hours (the regular workday plus the hours that are paid extra, which are not obligatory but almost all employees took), workers would like to wash themselves before leaving the factory, but for reasons they do not know this has also been prohibited. As soon as the dismissal bell sounds they are to leave the building. Workers who take two buses complain that they feel dirty all the way home because of Yucatan's extreme heat. They say the administration "doesn't even care how you go home," as one of the interviewed women mentioned.

g) The building facilities are large and practical for production; however, certain details were overlooked, for instance, they do not have any outside windows. This, together with the climate of the region and the heat generated from 180 machines with only fans for ventilation creates sleepiness and makes the work more tedious.

Experienced workers long for fresh air and a window to be able to look at the outside world from time to time. This contrast with the fact that the administration does have air conditioning, making the worker's situation more unbearable. Workers used to refresh their faces with water to fight drowsiness; this, however, is not possible anymore as supervisors write down the times they get up and could report them to the manager. Facing this situation, they feel the administration does not care for them: "They are in the air conditioned area all day and do not know what it is to have to stand the high temperatures and humidity for 10 hours everyday."

Garment Workers and the Everyday Struggle for Power

The owner, general director, managers (all four men), the production manager's secretary, workshop supervisors, assistant supervisor and workers, in this order, are the hierarchical ranks given in the factory.

Administrators informed us that supervisors are necessary to organize the production of so many workers, since the administration deals only with supervisors. A direct consequence of this is that a supervisor, by mediating between the administration and the workers, has the elements to either help or hurt any worker in their workroom; she may help a worker obtain a higher salary or she may "freeze" her at the lowest level. Workers know this well; therefore, there is a constant struggle among some workers to benefit themselves by obtaining the favor of the supervisor. Besides, by being close to a supervisor, a worker may indirectly help her friends with her influence. A worker who is close to a supervisor obtains for herself certain power and influence. Workers who do not make use of these practices despise the ones

who do flatter their superiors. This struggle for influence and power makes enemies out of workers, creates resentment and results in an unpleasant working environment. It also prevents workers solidarity, they have not even think about unionized.

All supervisors were women and used to be machine workers one time. However, when they were made supervisors these women came closer to the administration and usually assumed an authoritarian attitude towards their former fellow workers. There is a case of a supervisor who was a machine worker for five years. Now that she has completely assumed a role as an authority; she is responsible for placing the poster by the water fountain and for the control of restroom permits. She enjoys the usage of power and easily screams at and insults the workers.

One interviewed worker who had recently quit the factory and had never had any problems with the supervisors[4] related the following: Once she was working and the lace she was using ran out; she raised the signal flag and was waiting for the assistant supervisor to bring her more material. The supervisor saw her and assumed she was wasting her time and screamed at her for not working, so the worker decided to quit her job at the factory.

In Yucatan a strategy of multiple wage workers in the same domestic unit is used for survival. This allows single young women to sacrifice salary and fringe benefits in exchange for a place which fits their personal desires.

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[4]The whole family of this worker is dedicated to sewing; they even have a semi-industrial sewing machine and two regular Singer machines. Even the two males in this family were involved in sewing production; they worked embroidering traditional shoes. One of the worker's brothers makes Bible covers.

For example, the last worker mentioned had been out of work for two weeks when she was interviewed. She lived in an extended family unit with her parents, a sister, her brother-in-law and her sister's four children who were between 7 to 12 years of age; all the adults contributed to the family budget. As a result, she could afford to leave her job without facing economic adversity despite her family's poorness. Moreover, her mother, who besides making and embroidering *hipiles* (the way the Mayan traditional garment i called in Yucatan),[5] washed clothes for money, left her some of the clothes to wash so she could have some spending money until she found a new job.

The struggle for power which results in a good image with the administration, especially the production manager, is fierce among the six supervisors. However, this image is not presented directly but is "filtered" through the manager's secretary. Given this situation their fight for power consists of belittling each other with the secretary so that some information gets to the manager. Besides, it is the secretary who decides who can make a direct appointment with the manager, after inquiring what is to be discussed; this gives her a lot of power which she underscores to workers and supervisors whenever she can.

The worker who quit because of the mistreatment from the supervisor reported that another supervisor visited her and tried to convince her to speak to the secretary of production management to make an appointment with the manager and get her case solved. This worker, however, said she was aware that the manager who visited

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[5]Rejón (1994) points that in Yucatan the traditional dress is called *hipil* (u-ipil) and not *huipil* as elswhere in Mexico. The above is true because the Maya *u-üipil* (huipil) would be translated as *tu hipil* (your *hipil*) in Spanish.

her was not interested in her case, but wanted to use her to hurt the image of the girl's supervisor in the eyes of the manager.

Another dynamic and efficient young worker interviewed has been offered the position of supervisor several times. She does not want to accept because, even as her salary would improve, she is conscious of the competition with the other supervisors which would await for her. Besides she says "I wouldn't know who really was my friend and who just wanted to help herself through me." She also does not picture herself befriending the secretary and she knows she would have no other choice.

It is surprising that within the prevailing unfriendly environment, the general opinion is that the administrators are "good people." I frequently heard the story of how during the early days of the factory the owner would work shoulder to shoulder with his workers. I was also told that when a worker gets to talk to the manager, he always agrees and grants their demands. Thus for them "it is the secretary who makes everything difficult." This was the case of a worker whose daughter had an accident and was hospitalized. The general manager allowed her to miss a whole week and she was given her full salary.

My guess is that the administrators are aware of the everyday struggle for power and approve of this form of organization. The supervisors and secretaries are the ones pictured as unjust and arbitrary and administrators are not confronted by the workers directly.

In summary: The interviews and comments by the workers about the ungratifying working environment, which makes for frequent personnel rotation, led me to conclude that the workers of Yucatan are not used to the impersonal relationships

an control of work which characterize "modernity." There are other parts of the country where one finds sectors of female labor force used to work hard under these productions systems, such as the workers at Mexico northern border. But in the local garment industry still women expect to be consider persons in the work place.

From the interviews, I have a basis to assume that workers would accept authoritarian labor relations if they were "paternalistic" as described by Fiona Wilson (1988) and labeled by her as "domestic relationships at the work place." Workers who know they are efficient at their job would like (and probably would deserve) to be recognized for their good work and to stop being harassed with controls they do not need to observe. Besides, they would like to be acknowledged as women by, for example, letting them wash and fix themselves up before leaving the factory. The criteria used in the allotment of benefits should be clarified to lessen the feelings of injustice many of them live with, along with the necessity to befriend the supervisors or the secretary to obtain these benefits.

Workers acknowledged that, certainly, some recently hired workers did not find it easy to learn how to manage the cloth and machines and usually quit. However a good number of workers quit simply because, despite the good salaries and fringe benefits the company offers, they can not take the strict control and the pressure put on them. As a result, it is clear that if these workers are to "be content and work well" good salaries and fringe benefits are not enough.

A Medium-sized Factory

The second case study refers to a regularly integrated medium-sized factory. The business was established in 1960 to sew *guayaberas*, although by 1991 it was

mainly manufacturing casual clothes. In 1991 it had 31 workers (26 women and 5 men). Two men were involved in cutting, two in packing and one in transportation. The only other man in the factory was the owner and, at the same time, general manager of the enterprise.

According to this man, men were indispensable for cutting because the rolls of fabric were too heavy and the cutting knives were hard to handle and dangerous, so both needed "a man's strength" to be used properly and safely. It was obvious and simple for this manager that, because of the above, these men should receive higher salaries than the women working in other departments. Also, the women had been paid by the piece for years, while the men were always earning a regular salary. However, by 1991 women had also a regular salary, usually the general minimum one. By then, the wage control by the state had made it more profitable for the factories to pay the minimum legal salary, rather than pay by piece.

Thus, at least in garment manufacturing, strength, a highly appreciated quality of the masculine labor force was compensated with more income, while patience, "nimble fingers," and great ability to assemble and sew ("women's qualities" as workers), were not. The above is true not only in this factory. The masculinization and higher salaries in the cutting department are the norm in apparel production in Yucatan and elsewhere.

According to the owner of the factory, men working in packing and transportation could not be replaced by women, because their activities also required strength. Heavy piles of garments had to be stored and distributed and, furthermore, women usually do not know how to drive. So men's greater strength and ability as drivers and mechanics, are important in these activities. The owner said that he did

not mind hiring men as sewers and that he had several tailors working in his business at different moments. From his experience they were always on time, serious, responsible, did not chat and were good at their work because their pride around so many women played a very important role in making them ideal workers.

Regarding women, although the manager said that he was not in the position to be very selective, hiring only workers with special features (because the labor force is very scarce in garment production), his "ideal worker" is a young women with no previous experience with apparel manufacturing. From his point of view, "women with these characteristics learn quickly and, when sewing with industrial machines, do not have the working defects some former seamstresses show."

When I visited the factory, it was subcontracted to sew grade school uniforms through piece work for another enterprise and, at the same time, was subcontracting home-based labor to meet these ends. It was also involved in its own production for local stores, manufacturing men's shirts and two diverse types of women's dresses.

The factory had a cutting department, although its machinery was not modern, various industrial sewing machines and an overlock. When the factory was mainly sewing guayaberas, it had a tucking machine; now they rarely have to manufacture this garment, but if they have this need, they hire home-based labor. The same is true for embroidering.

From my point of view, production was organized mainly through subcontracting. Although the manager insisted they always have "their own production," I always saw the factory being contracted for other factories and/or clothes stores.

Although it was not recognized by the factory owner when interviewed, there were several middlemen working on it and, truly, they all were men. I interviewed two of these middlemen. Both they and the factory's owner stated that middlemen worked "on their own," not as employees of the factory. Their earnings originated with the difference between the amount given by the factory for each piece sewed and that paid to the home-based workers. Needless to say, these circumstances lowered home-based labor salary to the minimum possible. I could not deny or confirm this information; however, it was obvious that even if they were "independent," they were working with the owner's consent and they were very familiar with the organization of the factory and its employees.

Again, to explain why only men were working as middlemen, strength was mentioned. It was pointed out that the packs of cut pieces that had to be distributed and those needed to be picked up with the finished garments were heavy. Another reason was that the middlemen had to drive vans though the popular sectors allocating piece-work and that home-workers respected men more. Thus, outworkers collected the work on time and did not have to argue constantly about the quantity of pieces delivered and the payment as he suspected that women would.

The female factory workers of this enterprise were mostly young. There was even a 14 year old girl, cutting threads. According to the manager, she was there as a special favor to one of his better workers since she was her niece and needed a job. But the presence of girls younger than the legal hiring age (16) is very common in apparel production. These illegal "favors," of course, have to be given without legal contracts, fringe benefits and other rights. Furthermore, after one of these "favors" is given to a worker, her loyalty is expected. It is also assumed that the older laborer

will closely supervise how her relative does the job and will help her learn quickly. Many workers take their friends and relatives to the factories. In the case I found, the manager told the worker "I will make an exception and risk myself by hiring your niece. I will do it only because I trust you and you have been a good worker."

Most of the laborers were in their late teens and early twenties. However, there were three workers that had been in that factory more than a decade, including the general supervisor who had been working there since the factory was founded. When I visited the factory she was 47 years old. She was very close to the factory's owner and his family, feeling that the owner and his wife really trusted her. She had even been in charge of the business when the owner and his family have traveled. She had to baby sit their children, attended their baptisms and other family gatherings and was always aware of what was going on in the family. She admired and loved her employers very much and that made her extremely faithful to them. On the other hand, because she had worked for so long as a direct worker, she felt she "understood" her younger work-mates. She felt responsible for supervising them well, which included teaching them what they did not know and to be "hard but warm," assuring they would respect her and be hard workers. However, it was very important for her not to forget "where she came from," which meant that she did not feel "superior" to the other workers. These conditions created a totally different working environment when compared to the large factory. Sewers were directly supervised by this women and felt confidence in her. She was a key person in the business and in creating a friendly working environment.

From my point of view, although she received the best salary in the factory, her earnings did not reflect her importance in the enterprise. However, she liked her

work very much, always tried to be fair and both the workers and the owner recognized her for all this. She felt proud of her position, "I got it being an honest person and a good worker" and for being the owner's closest laborer. I am sure she will work there as long as she can, continuing to be loyal to the owner. As Wilson (1988) has stated, in this factory domestic relations were taken into the work environment.

The owner's wife during the morning was almost the manager's main assistant. She was in the factory daily, "helping" him handle the worker's personal problems, deciding which garments to sew, etc. Especially, she was in charge of checking the quality of the work done by home-based workers that picked the pieces up directly in the factory and the production taken there by the middlemen.

Contradictorily, factory workers liked her, while home-based ones did not. The former said she made jokes with them and had made her husband do special favors for the laborers, such as letting them be absent when it was really necessary and lending them money. They claim she is important because "when you are a woman, it is easier to make arrangements with another woman." The home-based workers thought she was rude and mean and discounted them part of their payments for everything. She counted every piece and charged the workers for the missing ones. They argue that sometimes it was not their fault. She checked every piece and did not pay them for the ones not properly sewed. Sometimes she had even sold them the poorly sewed garments.

In 1985-86 the workers in the factory were paid by piece and pressure to make them work hard was almost absent, although they all knew that not working fast and intensively would diminish their earnings to a minimum. However, young single

women sometimes lowered their productive rhythm after dinner, because they were bored and tired. This was a luxury that married women and household heads, for sure could not afford. By 1991-92 legal minimum salaries were paid; married women and household heads complained because they could not get extra money by working harder. For this reason they preferred working by the piece.

In this factory, the close ties between the manager, his wife and the supervisor made for a very different working environment if compared with the one found in the big factory of Case Study No. 1. Paternalistic authoritarism was undoubtedly present, but they were crucial for workers to feel good and protected. Laborers accepted the owner, his wife and the supervisor's orders, but the three knew all the worker's names and most of their family problems. The supervisor played a special role in this.

Workers used to ignore their legal rights, so bonuses for extra hours, leaves of absence for medical appointments, Christmas bonuses, etc., were seen as privileges bestowed by the kindness of the owner and his wife. Consciously or not, the wife greatly reinforced this situation. She continuously referred to the factory workers with nicknames and made them feel that every right was special due to her talking to her husband. Not surprisingly, within the factory, the workers had never thought about organizing or unionizing. For them, everything could be solved by talking to the owner, his wife, or the supervisor; thus as a worker said "there was no need to create problems."

Although there was specialization in the factory, it could not be said that work was organized by assembly lines. The owner and the supervisor jointly decided which tasks were to be carried out in the factory and which ones were to be handled by the middlemen through home-based labor. Despite the number of different models the

factory was involved in, the cutter handled all of them. The supervisor distributed the diverse tasks to be performed among different workers, assigning a few workers to each model. Usually, each worker would perform a specific task. In the finishing and packing, again the same laborers would work with the entire factory production.

The work day in this factory lasted from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday, although when the work intensified, Saturday mornings were also included, paid overtime.

In summary: Paternalistic relations in the factories are well accepted by the workers. The reinforcing of these relations is the everyday life in these factories; for example, offering legal rights as favors, hiring worker's relatives, expecting loyalty. The owner, his wife, the supervisor and the workers truly believe that they are part of the same team. This hides the structural differences of the team, for instance, the supervisor felt almost part of the owners's family, but after many years of loyalty and hard work she remained being a wage worker in the factory. Taking care of the business and knowing how it is handled have not made her share its profits. Consciously or not, these relations are a strong barrier for worker's awareness of their legal rights.

A Small Factory

This case study was based on the information gathered at a factory of sport clothes of six workers plus the owner and manager of the business. The in depth interview was conducted with the general supervisor, a woman who had been working in the same factory for seventeen years, since one or two years after it opened.

The seven persons in the enterprise were: the owner, the supervisor, a man who did the cutting, three women who did the sewing and another young women involved in finishing and packing. The infrastructure of the factory was limited: a hand cutting saw, three overlocks and a steam iron.

Owner and manager: one man
Supervisor: one woman
Cutting (saw): one man
Assembling (overlocks): three women
Finishing and packing: one woman
TOTAL: seven persons

However, as the supervisor pointed out, it was enough for the kind of business the factory carried out. The factory was small, located in an adapted old house in the southern part of the downtown. It did not have good light nor air conditioning, just fans, so it was very hot during the summer.

This factory produced garments for several of the sports stores located in Merida on a regular basis. Although it also very often produced for local baseball teams and schools of the entire peninsula. According to the supervisor, this factory was the oldest of its kind and despite its small size the production was not little because it was well known locally. She also said that because "they" were serious and "their" prices fair, although by now they have more competition, many still preferred "them." She felt as proud of the business as the owner himself. This pride was shared by the workers involved in assembling as well.

Because of the fabrics they used and the very special kind of clothes they made, workers felt they were specialists in this kind of garments. From my point of view, this made them very good workers; they felt that after all these years they "knew" how to do their job without making mistakes.

The internal production organization might have an influence in this pride. Women using the overlocks were in charge of making whole garments. They divided the manufacturing by tasks and performed them separately to speed up the process. For example, first all the same sizes were separated. Then all the sleeves were closed and then all the bodies; next the sleeves would be attached to the bodies, etc. So clearly once a piece was totally finished it was somebody's own work and nobody wanted to make mistakes. Women in this enterprise were middle aged (between thirty five and fifty) and already had been working there for a while.

The work day was from 8 AM to 5 PM from Monday though Friday, with half an hour (12:30-1 p.m.) for lunch and from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. on Saturday. Lunch was brought by the workers from home and since there was no special place to eat it in the factory, workers usually walked to a nearby park to eat. Afternoon on Saturdays the work stopped and the workers were paid the minimum legal salary in cash (in 1985-86 the payment was by the piece). Thus, the hours worked weekly were more than the 40 established in the Federal Labor Law. However, workers said it was fair because some weeks they had little to do and their salary was guaranteed anyway (an unusual situation in the garment industry). They were also convinced that the owner's profits were not that huge: "He gets enough to live decently, but he's not a millionaire," the supervisor told me. When extra-time was needed to finish a special job, they were advised beforehand and always accepted to work as much as necessary. They usually were compensated economically; however, occasionally they were not. Again, they did not blame the owner for this; workers were sure he had compensated them "every time he could."

One laborer said that they had to watch out not only for themselves, but also for the owner's interests, because the future of the enterprise was "their" future. Hence, even if missing out on a certain amount of salary, they were guaranteeing a "nice" place to work, which was difficult to find.

The relationships within this factory were very much as those of a family, with hierarchies and a clear leader: the owner, a paternalistic figure. It was astonishing to find out how these kinds of relations, even if created by chance, winded up being an appropriate mechanism for worker control. Again, "good" treatment and knowing at least some of the factory's production problems, turned out to be a means of creating extreme loyalty. Workers did not even think about unionizing or protesting collectively for a long workday or a lack of fringe benefits or low salary.

Also that most of the workers had been together for a while contributed to this environment of solidarity. Furthermore, they had recommended each other whenever a new worker was needed. Thus, from the very beginning, they had close personal ties between them.

The owner was a "nice," but distant man to the workers. If needed he "talked" to the supervisor and the supervisor would give concrete orders to the workers. But according to the supervisor, since the factory was so small and limited to the elaborating of a very special kind of garments and since she knew all about the business, she could decide on her own most of the times whenever problems arose. She told me she even decided when to give the workers special leaves to be absent, be late, or leave early, etc.

However, the owner always decided on what kind of production to get involved in and on the quantity and sizes to be made. He also had total control over

commercialization and close relationships to the sports store for which he regularly had sewn for many years. Apparently, he was also the only one who knew how the designs and patterns got into the factory. He told me that sports clothes do not vary that much and that he had been using the same patterns for a long time.

In summary: Again, when feeling part of a team workers did not complain about their working conditions. Long workdays and low salaries were justified as a means to keep a nice place to work in. In this particular factory the pride of each women as worker was tested every time they finished a garment. So this way of organizing production had become a very important way of work control without an authoritarian pattern. As in the medium-sized factory, a female supervisor close to the owner was also crucial to handle the business. Again, her extreme loyalty seemed to be rewarded just by the feeling that he trusted her.

A Clandestine Sweatshop

The sweatshop whose working conditions were researched in depth belonged to a very dynamic women. Only she and three sewers were involved in manufacturing lycra garments, mainly bathing suits and dancing outfits. The sweatshop was located in the north part of Merida, in the owner's house. It occupied a large special room that was constructed in the back, strategically hidden by the house.

The owner's house was huge and fancy; it was built in the middle of an enormous field. In the front, to the left, it had a gorgeous garden that surrounded a swimming pool. Just outside the fence, hidden by a wall at the right, there was a room where the main models of garments that could be sewn there were displayed. There were also several magazines and samples of the types of fabrics and colors

that could be used. In this room, there also was a big mirror and a place where the garments could be tried on. This front room was the place where anybody could see, try on and decide on what kind of products to order. It was also the place where the garments were paid for and picked up. Thus, the general public did not see the site in which the sewing took place nor the house in detail. It took me three visits to her front store and hours of conversation to be invited to see her working shop.

The shop was a single big rectangular room with a large table on one of its sides with shelves behind it for the diverse materials to be used (fabrics, elastics, threads). On the other side of the room there were four overlocks and more shelves to store plastic bags, hangers and the finished products. Everything was neat and in perfect order at least on the day I visited it. The whole room was well illuminated and ventilated. The three sewers were working there. They all were young and single, living in the same neighborhood, earning the minimum salary, but lacking in medical care and not having the years worked counted for retirement, because of the clandestine nature of the factory. The three of them were friends.

The owner designed many of the models; she was also able to reproduce models from a magazine. She made the necessary patterns and cut out the fabrics with scissors in her own factory. She told me these tasks were complicated. They could not be done with sophisticated machinery because it was too easy to make mistakes since the material was very slippery. If she was working to make many garments with the same model and size, she cut them out two by two at the most.

According to her it was not so easy to learn how to sew these kinds of garments. She needed good laborers because she worked sometimes with expensive imported lycra. That was one of the reasons why she cut personally. She was very

careful with the way the patterns were displayed on the fabric. As she said "any little mistake might mean large quantities of money." The threads used were elastic and usually a piece of elastic had to be sewn around the inside of the legs, neck and arms. Also the seams were always visible, so they had to be perfect. From her point of view, "a good fabric makes the garment pretty, but the way it is assembled makes it gross and cheap, or nice and fancy." Because of the above she closely supervised her workers and never hired home-based labor.

Although this shop was clandestine, everybody involved in dance in Merida knew about it. The clothing used in almost all the dance festivals, including the government fine arts school, were made there. She also sewed the uniforms for private dance schools. In many cases, they were ordered by the owners of these schools with very special fabrics and fashions, so they could not be found any place else. Then, they were sold by the schools almost duplicating the original price. The owner of the factory was aware of this, but did not mind: "They earn money but I also earn money" was her answer.

In Merida, the upper and middle class used to have beach houses. During July and August, the months of school vacation, women and children permanently go to them. For them, it was very important to be "well dressed," so it was common to go to the shop and have very special bathing suits made, mainly for female teenagers and girls. Thus, although this factory specialized in a concrete type of garments, work was not scarce. The huge profits that this very small business generated could be seen in the large field the house occupied,[6] the enormous fancy house, the new cars and vans the family owned, etc., all from the business profits.

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[6]Although the field was in *ejidal* land, its extension made it expensive.

However, all this prosperity had jeopardized the owner's marriage. She told me that she always loved sewing bathing suits. At first she started to make her own, then she sewed for family and friends. Once she did all the costumes for her daughter's dance school and everybody liked them. Little by little she got involved in sewing as a way of life. However, when she really started making big profits, her husband became aggressive and mean. She understood it was because his obligations as breadwinner were being questioned. She was the one who could afford to pay for trips outside Mexico for everybody. She was the one who could sent her children to private schools, etc. The relationship between them got worse and worse, until, at a point when they were arguing, he hit her. Desperate, she went to a Catholic priest and told him that she was a hard working women, faithful in her marriage, always watching after her son and daughter; she paid and supervised maids to have everything done in the house, feeling it was strongly unfair to be treated like that.

The priest advised her to be smart and "give her husband his place" in the house and in the business, "make him feel he is in on the making of the profits, not out." So she started to complain to her husband that she could not handle the business by herself; she started asking him to drive the van, pick up the fabrics, deliver the finished work, etc., to make him feel that without his help the business could not go on. "I am so thankful to my wise priest. With this strategy, I not only saved my marriage, the most important thing is that I could continue doing what I really enjoyed. I seriously had thought about quitting."

She was aware that she was able to handle all the business by herself. She even preferred to make decisions alone. For example, in designing, the combination

of fabrics plays a very important role. If her husband did not bring the proper materials for her ideas, she had to see what tricks where necessary to go out and get them. But from her point of view, these little inconveniences paid off since she could continue living in peace with the "father of her children."

In summary: In this case study the internal working conditions were not different from the two cases described above. However, in this particular factory the owner was a women and did not rely on a female supervisor. Instead, she related directly to the workers. In essence, this difference did not change the internal relations: "problems" were solved by the owner on an individual basis with each worker and "permissions" (for instance, to attend a medical appointment and to get vacation) were handled as personal "favors," as in many other factories in the city.

Nonetheless, the interesting point of this last case is the outcome of the factory owner's gender. The wives of the garment entrepreneurs felt proud of their husbands and many volunteered to help them running the factories.[7] But when this women's enterprise became successful an she turned out to be her household's main economic provider, her marriage was jeopardized. Her success was not a means of pride for her husband, on the contrary, he felt threatened.

Final comments: The interviews carried out with owners, managers and supervisors in the garment factories made evident how important personal relationships are in apparel manufacturing. Garment businessmen relied almost entirely on their personal relationships with other entrepreneurs for subcontracting and sales. Through their wives and female supervisors close relations with workers,

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[7]A wife of a garment entrepreneur told me that she was in the factory every day because she did not like the idea of leaving her husband around so many young women.

apparel entrepreneurs kept the internal organization of the factories on-going. Even home-based labor was based on personal relations between owners and middle men and workers and middle men.

Furthermore, apparel commercialization was done mainly through relatives, acquaintances and friends. Many of the local apparel manufacturers, owners of large stores and other regional enterprises were from an arabic origin and had constructed a network of solidarity between them. Thus, ethnic identity is important also for local businessmen (members of this group are locally designed as *turcos*, which means from Turkey).

Within the factories personal relations were also crucial, for example, workers told friends and relatives when a position in a factory was vacant. They even talked with supervisors and owners to make sure their friends got into these positions. On the long run these ties ended up being a very important part of the process of organizing garment production: they created ties of loyalty between old workers, new workers, supervisors and businessmen. Loyalty around the work place was a feeling hard to grasp and understand from a capitalistic perspective, but unquestionably present in the local garment factories. Loyalty and disloyalty, strongly related to personal relations and "favors" received and done were key issues. They kept workers away from organizing, so they had never even though about unionizing. If women laboring at factories recognized themselves clearly as workers, the "favors" received and done and the "loyalty" expected trapped them. To avoid "creating problems" to owners or "betraying" a friend or a nice supervisor, they did not protest. At the most, if they disliked the job they just silently shifted to another work place. Unawareness of their legal rights contributed to keep this situation on-going. Medical

appointments, enrollment in the national health service, vacation, economic bonuses, etc. were given and accepted as personal "favors."

Male owners of garment business relied on female supervisors as an intermediate level of authority between them and the workers, but they remained in the highest authority level. Owners were distant figures of authority (as many times fathers were at home), while their wives and the female supervisors were also considered authorities but were closer to workers. Having in the factories a woman "to talk with" also kept the workers away from organizing collective protests. However, these relations seemed to be expected and accepted by the workers.

When these relations were changed, workers felt uncomfortable. This is the conclusion that can be drawn from the experience of case study No. 1, a close control over their work, rules and sanctions around the factories and impersonal relations with supervisors and owners made the workers uncomfortable despite fair salaries and fringe benefits.

However, in 1986 the first garment *maquiladora* ("*Industria Textil Maya*") was installed in Yucatan. As previously described, soon after it was opened workers protested against its strict work control. But by now the plant has been working in Merida for nine years. Furthermore, in 1991 there were 21 *maquiladoras* working in the state (although not all of them were garment factories). Moreover, in 1991 three garment factories were installed in the sisal zone, which added up to a large factory established in this same zone since 1987. Thus, diverse forms of organizing production are carried out in the state today. They are creating sectors of workers involved in the same economic branch but under very different working conditions.

Besides, women with diverse ethnic origins and rural and urban experiences are being incorporated into the state's apparel manufacturing production.

Offshore multinational corporations along with large local factories in the track of succeeding in the international market, cannot adjust their working conditions to the paternalistic relations workers are used to and expect. Only one of the 105 women reinterviewed was working on a *maquiladora* (and the plant where she was working in was manufacturing fishing canes, not garments). Nevertheless, "modernity" has been influencing at least some sectors of Yucatecan women. How this is impacting their identities? This important question is waiting to be researched and answered.

CHAPTER 5
ABOUT THE DOMESTIC GROUPS

Introduction

Once the "historic time" as background of worker's lives has been outlined and their working conditions have been described and analyzed, the "family time" and the "individual time" will be addressed. These latter two "times" constitute the second part of the study an will be developed from this Chapter on. To accomplish this goal first, a general overview about the theory and methodology used to deal with domestic groups will be presented. The need for a methodological distinction between domestic unit and co-resident domestic group is highlighted here. This distinction is necessary because at least in Yucatan the domestic unit, viewed as integrated by people that carry out together domestic functions on an every day basis, does not match mechanically the group of residence. Second, a review about the empirical research of domestic groups will be done. The importance of kinship and co-resident groups in the process of construction of women's identities is discussed. The position of the women in their households is proposed as a category capable of capturing the synthesis of women's stages in their personal life courses and their family's cycle as they impact their identities. In the third place, the literature that in Mexico has researched co-resident domestic groups will be examined. Fourth, a proposal for analyzing household composition will be presented. This typology has as main goal to capture the ways in which households extend and, very especially, the real number

of female headed households they have. Very often these female heads are "hidden" in households headed by men. Fifth, the characteristics of multiple garment workers co-resident groups will be addressed. These households represented 8.7% of the home-based workers' and 18.8% of the factory laborers' households. At last, the major changes in women's lives and labor trajectories for "daughters," "wives," "wives and mothers" and "household heads" will be addressed. This general overview will set the basis for a close analysis of each group, which will be carried out in the following chapter.

A General Overview

In the anthropological and socio-demographic literature, with minimal conceptual variants, it is accepted, that:

> the concept of domestic unit alludes to an organization structured through nets of social relations among individuals that might or not be linked by kinship. These individuals share residence and organize their daily reproduction in common (de Oliveira and Salles, 1990:14)

Thus, domestic units do not mechanically match the "family" because not all the co-resident individuals are necessarily relatives and not all the individuals with shared kinship live together. Therefore, the family is defined on a basis of historically and socially sanctioned kinship relations, which by far overwhelm the domestic unit (Bender, 1967).

Also, whether the members of domestic units are or are not linked by kinship, they usually have an internal organization to perform domestic functions directed to organize, at least, part of their daily reproduction in common.

But in the Latin American context, there is no mechanical correspondence between domestic functions and the sharing of a residence. For instance, within the

Yucatecan popular-urban sectors the performance of some domestic chores is frequently done though women's networks that involved women who do not conform the co-resident group. Mothers, mothers-in-law, sisters or just friends, often living nearby, prepare food, care for children, buy the groceries for members of others co-resident groups. This same situation was found by Lima (1992:36) in Mexico City (*Colonia Pedregal de Santo Domingo*) pointing that,

> generally the domestic unit is constituted of nuclear family groups related to each other through kinship, living nearby. On many occasions, the absence of relatives causes that the relations of reciprocity and interchange are established between neighbors (the underlined is mine).

The importance of networks that go beyond the co-resident group in the survival of poor people was highlighted a long time ago (Lomnitz, 1977; Safa, 1974). For this reason I consider methodologically necessary to differentiate between the co-resident group and the domestic unit. The latter implies a collective organization of the domestic functions necessary for daily reproduction and, as stated before, these domestic functions do not mechanically match the co-resident group.

Hence, the development of domestic functions is not necessarily performed only by members of co-resident groups. These are carried out by the domestic units which may or may not match the domestic groups (Yaganisako, 1979:165).

Therefore, in this paper co-resident groups (Bender, 1967),[1] will be synonymous with the terms domestic residential groups or simply domestic groups. I will consider them to be the social space formed by individuals that share the same

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[1]Quesnel and Lerner (1990:41) name them residential domestic groups (*grupos domésticos residenciales*) and differentiate them from the domestic groups of interaction (*grupos domésticos de interacción*) to "enlarge the family space".

house and have an internal organization to perform together at least part of their daily reproduction. Besides, in my sample, the individuals are linked by kinship with the exception of one case, a worker living with her *comadre*. But in Mexican culture *comadres* and *compadres* are almost close relatives.

Making a difference between the concepts co-resident group and domestic unit is not the most common practice in socio-demographic research. Both concepts are usually taken as a synonymous (Hammel and Laslett, 1974; García *et al.*, 1982; González, 1986; de Oliveira y Salles, 1990; Sheridan, 1990, etc.).

However, I am aware that during field work I exclusively gathered information about domestic groups of the female garment workers who were interviewed. I did not go deeply into the networks to fulfill the every day domestic functions that non-residential domestic units carried out. Lomnitz (1977) has made a theoretical difference between domestic units and social relations networks.

About the Empirical Research of Domestic Groups

The analysis of the co-residential groups has been carried out from different theoretical perspectives. Among the most important are:

a) cross cultural comparative studies (Hammel and Laslett, 1974; Stephens, 1982)

b) ethnographic descriptions of different residential arrangements (Campos, 1985; Franco, 1992)

c) links to the historical, economical and cultural role that the co-resident groups play in the society of which they are part (Estrada, 1980; García *et al.*, 1982; González, 1986; Sheridan, 1990; Safa, 1990) and recently,

d) studies of the co-resident group which has begun to be taken as "the initial institution in the formation of the *habitus*"[2] (Lima, 1992:33), granting it a very important place in the construction of identities, subjectivities and symbolizations of reality.

Co-resident groups are of great importance in the conformation of personal and collective world views and of each one's place in society because they are cultural spaces that constitute a main referent for each individual. Furthermore, in the multiple studies performed in Mexico (and Yucatan is not an exception), it has been made clear that co-resident groups are fundamentally based on kinship and that they constitute THE context of the experience of each Mexican (Selby *et al.*, 1990:53).

In this work, the study of domestic groups is taken up as a form to break the arbitrary separations that were imposed in the last decade upon the studies of women's incorporation into wage labor. Usually, their every day lives were blurred from the panorama of analysis. This study aims to clarify the close relationships between the so-called "public" sphere (in this case, the working place) and "the private" one (the domestic space) in women's lives, as an interdependent whole.

If for epistemological reasons the social totality is separated into spheres of analysis, in reality there is not a specific place where class, race, ethnic and gender identities are constructed. In this sense, the working place is as important as the domestic context as are their interdependent relationships. Also the extra-household

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[2]Habitus is the process through which the social life is interiorized making that the objective structures concord with the subjective ones... The habitus generated by the objective structures generates individual practices, it gives to behavior the basic schemes of perception, thought and action (García, 1986:25).

and extra-labor individual and collective experiences (school, church, friends, neighbors, etc) play a very important role.

Throughout life all these experiences make individuals interiorize norms, learn hierarchies linked to their place in the household, their ethnic origin, their gender, their life cycles, etc. in a personal and particular way. Also the possible places to be occupied in the labor market, according to the dominant relations of production are constructed in this way. In all these areas and throughout their life cycles, individuals acquaint themselves with the socially constructed norms. However, they learn and follow some structures and de-structure and re-structure others through new symbolizations.

Throughout this process of continual change, the specific relations of production to which the families, co-resident groups and domestic units are tied (and that precede the existence of any of its members) combine with the every day action of each individual.

From my point of view, even though the social sciences currently tend to privilege the particular case instead of the general norm, the social actors instead of the social classes, etc., it is unquestionable that the personal and domestic worlds, by far, are organized in relation to macrosocial demands and limitations, even if it is not done in a mechanical way. Because of this, the so-called "micro" and "macro" structures as spaces of social reality are not isolated from each other.

Global theories have fallen into academic discredit, now emphasizing the perspective of the individual actions. But it is without doubt that into the capitalistic logic, the domestic group continues to be a key to account for the concrete forms in which the reproduction of the working population is performed. It is also useful to

understand how the micro-physics of power is exercised (Foucault, 1978), with its specific forms of creating and reproducing subordination and resistance.

Furthermore, the domestic group as a unit of analysis, both in its economic dimension and in its members' daily practices,[3] has an explicative capacity to account for the repercussions of the economic crisis and the structural adjustment policies on the living conditions of diverse social sectors.

It is also a means to trace the alliances and tensions that the crisis is provoking and to research the economic strategies that are being devised to confront the crisis and adjustment policies. In this sense both the crisis and the structural adjustment policies are acting as engines for cultural change because they are reorganizing the social and economic structure.

Currently, it is more difficult for men to fulfill their roles as breadwinners (Safa, forthcoming) and more women are becoming wage laborers (Chant, 1994a; Rendón, 1990). What is happening to the feminine and masculine identities and with domestic arrangements and hierarchies? How are these changes influencing the social totality? The analysis of the co-resident and/or domestic units has the capacity to provide elements to answer these questions.

Typologies for the Analysis of the Domestic Groups

In the last decade, several studies in Mexico have addressed the co-resident groups and their survival strategies (Chant, 1994a). Diverse authors have taken explicit positions and used specific methodologies to deal with the homogeneity and

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[3]Determined by cultural guidelines, personal expectations, tradition, change, solidarity and conflict.

heterogeneity of the residential arrangements in the country. They have also used diverse empirical indicators to comprehend this homogeneity or heterogeneity, as well as the elements that allow the causes of its similarities and its differences to be valued.

For example, the study by García *et al.* (1982) of working households in Mexico City was a pioneer in this line of research, its general objective was

> to know the mechanisms that, at the level of the home, underlaid the participation in the labor market of the members who were not heads of households. (García *et al.*, 1982:11)

To study the insertion of the household members in the labor market these authors took as a unit of analysis the domestic groups and not only the isolated individuals, as was common practice previously. The information that was used in this work was based upon data collected from 13,000 people grouped in 2,401 homes. The field work data was obtained between October of 1969 and January of 1970 (García *et al.*, 1982:182).

This study gave priority to the occupation of the male head of households as the main heterogeneous factor within the domestic groups and considers as the head "the person designated as such by the members of the unit that provides the information to this respect" (García *et al.*, 1982:51). The study defined class membership of the male head based on whether "they sell or do not sell their labor" (García *et al.*, 1982:77). From this information, they classified them as waged workers and non-waged workers, being the waged ones the backbone of their study. The waged household heads were subdivided into two groups

> the waged non-manual workers (professionals, technicians, administrators, salesmen, etc.) and the manual waged (production, construction and services workers whose activities depend mainly on use of physical force). (García *et al.*, 1982:77)

It is from this variable that the authors analyzed the placement in the labor market of the rest of the members of these domestic groups. They were able to clarify the usefulness of taking the co-resident group as a whole into consideration, instead of the isolated individuals, to understand the logic of the labor market.

González (1986) as part of a larger project in which other researchers participated, analyzed 99 workers' domestic groups from Guadalajara. Her main interest:

> revolves around the way in which the domestic unit is affected -in its internal structure and organization- in its relations with the work market if the whole market would be segmented (González, 1986:12)
>
> in this way, the urban working class would be differentiated for its participation in the "formal" or "informal" sectors (in the sense that its members would participate in one or another sector) and its organization, structure and domestic economy would vary according to its way of participation (González, 1986:13)

This author categorized the insertion of the household head in production activities taking into account formal (industry and services), informal (industry and services), agriculture employment and the unemployed (González, 1986:49-51).

She also considered the co-resident group as a unit of analysis and took into account the occupational mobility of its head and others of its members. She concluded that, from the perspectives of the survival strategies implemented by households at different moments of their cycle, the formal and informal workers' domestic groups were homogeneous, at least in Guadalajara. In her own words:

> The working class of Guadalajara is characterized by a high degree of homogeneity, due basically to a great working rotation (González, 1986:14)

She concluded that the observable synchronic differences in the co-resident groups of her sample are due to the domestic cycle, which implies the household composition and labor force available to launch into the working market; thus, not only

the place of household heads in the formal or informal jobs is an important variable. In her study the popular sectors from Guadalajara

> conform only one type of workers' domestic unit that share strategies and means of organization (González, 1986:198)

Sheridan's work (1990) has as a main goal

> the analysis and study of the conditions in which the reproduction of the labor force takes place inside the domestic unit (Sheridan, 1990:11)

In the 231 domestic units she sampled 1,328 individuals male and female workers from the industry at Azcapotzalco, D.F. (Sheridan, 1990:49). Sheridan is aware that even if the units that share an urban physical space look similar in their socio-demographic features, this appearance does not hold when the organization of daily life is taken into account (Sheridan, 1990:109). In her sample daily economic survival involved more than one individual, not directly linked to industrial work. The domestic units showed diverse levels of life, marked by different budgets and resources.

Because of the objectives pursued by the three studies mentioned before, in all of them the socio-demographic characteristics of the male household heads were used as the main independent variable to deal with similarities and differences inside the domestic groups. In the three studies the male head's main economic occupation was used as key (waged manual or non-manual workers, formal or informal workers and workers from the transformation industry from a specific residential area, respectively).

Co-resident Domestic Groups in Socio-demographic Perspective

In socio-demographic perspective, there have been three basic elements commonly used to characterize co-resident groups: their family life cycle, their

composition and their size (García *et al.*, 1982 and 1989). Nevertheless, there is no homogeneity in the methodology used to study the first two elements. Dealing with composition the most commonly utilized methodology is to group them by main types with analytic purposes. However, almost every author uses his/her own typology making it hard to carry out comparisons.

For example, García *et al.* (1982) classify the groups as nuclear (a couple, with or without children); extended (the couple, with or without children, plus other relatives); composite (the co-resident domestic group related by kinship, plus individuals not related by kinship); and non-nuclear, either unipersonal or pluripersonal.

Chávez (1985) classifies the co-resident groups as: single individuals, non-nuclear (individual, not related by marriage or with parents-offspring relationships); nuclear (couples with or without offspring); extended (when a relative who is not an offspring or spouse is present); multifamily (with two or more nuclear groups); and fraternal (when brothers and/or sisters live together without any parent). Many other authors have used other forms to aggregate the composition of the resident groups (for example, Selby *et al.*, 1990).

There is no homogeneity regarding the vulnerability of the Mexican domestic groups to confront the impoverishment that the population is presently suffering due to the economic crisis and the structural adjustment policies that the government has imposed. There are not enough anthropological studies addressing its impact on the domestic groups (González, 1986 and 1988a and b, is a pioneer in the field).

It seems that the class of the male head, with its impact on his salary and his fringe benefits plays a very important role (García *et al.*, 1982, Merrick and Schmink,

1983). However, the number of members in the household, household composition (especially the number of members of working age) and the stage in the family life cycle, are elements that cannot be overlooked in the analysis of its vulnerability (González, 1986 and 1988a).

At the international level the households that face the worst conditions for survival in the countryside and in the cities are the ones headed by women and it is estimated that their number is rising. The vulnerability of woman-headed households has augmented with the crisis. This vulnerability is due to (González, 1988a and b; Merrick and Schmink, 1983):

a) The absence of the generally better paid member in the domestic unit: the male head. Males are reported to contribute a lesser proportion of their salary to the household budget, but in absolute terms their contribution is the highest one (*Banco Mundial*, 1993).

b) The segmented labor market which places female household heads in the worst paid activities, deprives them of fringe benefits and limits seriously their possibilities of promotion or becoming skilled.

c) Greater isolation caused by the absence of women at home strengthening social networks. These networks have proven to be very important in situations of poverty (Lomnitz, 1977). Often these households have fewer working members.

It has been reported that to deal with this vulnerability woman-headed households undertake various survival strategies. One of them is to incorporate relatives that are not part of the nuclear family. These members can look for wage labor and contribute to the domestic economy. They can also take charge of or, at least, help with domestic chores making the access into the labor market for other

members easier (González, 1988a:208). Nevertheless, since my main interest is the interplay between the domestic group and women's places in the clothing industry labor force, the occupation of the male head used as an independent variable did not seem the best way to cluster the co-resident groups.

In order to compare the domestic groups between home-based and factory workers in apparel manufacturing, I considered it useful to use what I call the position of the female workers in their co-resident groups. From my point of view, the position of the female workers synthesizes three fundamental interlinked processes that have a bearing on the determination of a workers' responsibilities within the households and the type of paid work to be performed:

a) the construction of the feminine identity, where not only gender, but also age and women's place in the household are important.

b) the woman's stage in the life cycle

c) the specific stage at which their domestic groups are situated.

Regarding the construction of feminine identity, Muñiz (1993:5) points out that:

> Anthropology of gender . . . was constructed over the dismantlement of the universal idea of women. . . Its foundation is the recognition of the difference, not only between cultural realities, but also between women's situations.

Being able to see differences, it is possible to establish the

> intersections between the different classes of differences. This means to recognize the diverse elements of identity and how an overlapping of one over the others exists: gender, race, class, age, occupation, etc. (Muñiz, 1993)

That is to say that, the biological differences (age, sex, skin color, body built complexion), social situations (class and strata, place of birth, level of education, civil status), cultural systems (ethnic, religious groups, neighborhood, kinship) and politics overlap. Some elements of the identity are re-defined and re-signified along the

individual's life, while others that Lagarde (1993:13) names "founding" remain unaltered throughout life (such as gender and race).

This conglomerate of processes dynamically define and re-define personal identity, as well as the different groups of interaction in which these individuals take part. The anthropology of gender deals with the construction of feminine identity as a way to deal with women's particularities.

For Lagarde (1993)

> The span of identity experiences I - the others, is framed in the relation and the form that the subject lives the resemblance, the difference and the singularity. Thus, the identity of being someone derives from the individual condition of the subject, allowing him/her to experience his/hers belonging to groups and non-belonging towards other groups (Lagarde, 1993:5).

> of the identity processes, gender is constitutive to the individual because it is founding and permanent throughout his-her life. Gender is associated to the development of self-identity and the conformation of women and men's physiques and body constitution, thus, even if they change, they are lived as constants facing others that do not last. (Lagarde, 1993:13)

For this author the gender identity, being founding and a constitutive part from the individuals throughout their lives, goes though a process of specification as the personal existence develops, mainly in combination with age. I would also argue that it is closely linked to changes in kinship relationships as the women go from daughters to wives, then mothers and sometimes household heads.

> The gender identity is prime to self-identity -because it is the first one to be internalized by the individual and because it defines him/her through all his/her life-, it is self-identity in process, centrally conformed by the complex of gender-age. Gender and age are linked in such a way that throughout women's and men's lives the categories that define them are mixed. *I am*, is learned and internalized as *I am a girl*, *I am a boy* and it continues as *I am a woman*, or *I am a man*. Equally, the gender-age complex is associated with other conditions such as the ones of class membership: to be an old peasant woman, to be an old aristocratic man; or health: being a sickly girl or a handicapped youngster, etc. (Lagarde, 1993:15).

In the studies on women's incorporation into wage labor, frequently this "I am" circumscribes to "I am a worker." With this approach women's public domain is rescued, but this overlap of identities is forgotten.

In the construction of "must be's" for men and women inside the home, hierarchies are not only based upon gender but also on the kinship system. They are constructed from the membership to a generation and the relationships with other members of the domestic group imply shades of hierarchies.

The male head is socially accepted as the boss in the house, but the women-mothers-wives and other adult household members have spaces of power where they subordinate younger men and women. At least in Yucatan, when women have a male partner he is considered "the head." Sometimes when he is permanently or temporally absent, this status goes to the older son. But if these same women are left alone through separation, divorce or widowhood and they reside with their family of origin again, their father or, in his absence, their mother will be the one that holds the highest hierarchy (the head). In this latter case the responsibility of the domestic chores falls to the mother alone. Even if mothers expect from their adult daughters with offspring "help," as well as to take care of that which is specific of her children (such as the laundry, children's baths, etc.). This arrangement makes the intra-household power spaces dynamic. Jelín and Feijoó (1983; 162-163) found in Argentina that,

> the activities and responsibilities of the girl-woman are determined by the place she occupies within the family constellation. Of course, the personal characteristics incline the balance to one or another direction. Tastes, sensibilities and preferences operate in a lesser or greater form in the way in which these pressures are accepted or internalized.

Methodologically, I needed to solve the articulation of the gender-age complex (Lagarde, 1993:15) in its relationships with the co-resident groups. Thus, for the analysis, I divided the domestic groups of my sample not in relation to the characteristics of the male heads, but leaning upon the element which I consider the key in terms of the feminine identity regarding the domestic group: the position of workers within their households. This position is also closely related to the specific phase in which the women find themselves regarding her personal cycle of life and the familiar dynamics. It is based on the kinship relations allotted to her in a given moment in the domestic group. The importance of this dynamic and changing position derives from the fact that

> The transitions in women's individual biographies are specially determined by her place in the family structures . . . (Jelin and Feijoó, 1983:148).

Then,

> Women's lives closely follow the logic of the events linked to the family cycles, with their demographic accidents -sibling births; in the first stages, presence or absence of the parents; later, formation of their family of procreation-, than the macrosocial transformations linked to the public sphere. (Jelin and Feijoó, 1983:152)

Using this perspective to group and compare women who on the basis of their personal and family life courses (Ojeda, 1990) present similar conditions and the resulting groups are more homogenous. That is, all female home-based and factory workers will be divided by the moments of their lives they were in when first interviews were done using the categories: daughters, wives, wives and mothers, sisters and household heads (widows, separated, divorced, single mothers and daughters main economic providers of their co-resident groups).

For example, by combining all the daughters in the sample, I am in fact homogenizing these groups from their familial perspective because they all live with

their families of origin. The same happens with the wives, the wives and mothers and the household heads, although the latter have already formed a family of procreation. If it is necessary for the analysis, it is possible to use other variables (women's age, male's age, children's age, etc.) to make sub-groups within these larger groups.

TABLE No. 13.
DOMESTIC UNITS.

TYPE	n	%
NUCLEAR	73	49.0
EXTENDED	75	50.3
COMPOSITE	1	0.7
WITHOUT NUCLEAR COMPONENT	2	1.4
UNIPESONAL	0	0.0
PLURIPERSONAL	0	0.0
TOTAL	149	100.0

A Proposal for Analyzing Household Composition

Furthermore, the analysis of the 149 households of female garment factory workers led me to the conclusion that there are two issues that should be considered in the construction of household composition typologies

a) the need to go further into the concept of extended co-resident group and

b) a reconsideration of who is registered as a female head of household.

The above Table (No. 13) records the frequency and conditional distributions of the domestic groups that were part of the sample, according to conventional criteria. As the data shows, with this distribution the category "extended household" is

not explicative of the concrete arrangements of half of the domestic groups interviewed. Thus, given the importance of "extended" groups in this sample, household composition should be analyzed with a typology capable of accounting for the specific forms through which the extension takes place.

The typology used here is based on the definition of a conjugal family unit given by Hammel and Lasslet (1974:86). For these authors, a complete conjugal unit is that formed by the couple with or without single co-residents offspring and an incomplete conjugal unit is that in which one of the spouses is absent, as long as single descendants are part of the co-resident group.

The typology used here is based on the number of conjugal family units present in each household in relation to *ego*, the interviewed female worker. Because the term "conjugal family unit" refers to the spouses, I choose instead the term family unit. In case there were individuals in the co-resident group not part of any family unit, I registered, respectively, "plus-relatives" or "plus non-relatives" in the classification.

Besides, I reordered if the family units were complete (when both spouses were present) or incomplete (when any of the two were absent). In this latter case, I noted which one was absent. In fact, "incomplete family unit" was a synonym of "woman headed family unit" since the frequency distribution accounted for only one case in which a widowed father lived alone with his offspring. Placing the emphasis on this point, I decided to name these arrangements "women headed family units" instead of "incomplete family units."[4]

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[4]A similar approach was taken by Quesnel and Lerner (1990:42) who also distinguished "... the diverse types of the central nucleus (the head's nucleus) found in more complex family arrangements and ...the nature of the other non-central

For example, a domestic unit in the sample consisted of a female worker (*ego*), her son, her two parents, three single brothers, a sister and her two sons and another sister and her two sons. The father was considered the household head and he also was the one who brought in the largest share of the family's budget. Therefore, anthropologically and socio-demographically this co-resident group was extended, headed by a man.

Nevertheless, the female worker and her two sisters were family unit heads sharing the house with their parents to ease the dynamics of their daily lives. The three worked for a wage and they were the only economic support for their children.

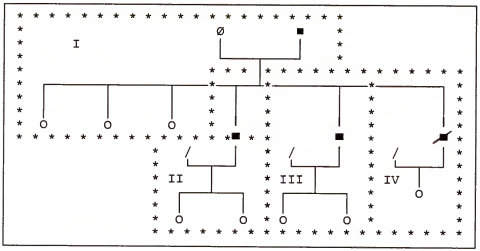

FIGURE No. 8. Domestic group and family units.

SYMBOLS

MAN	O	FEMALE FAMILY UNIT HEAD	■
WOMAN	■	SPOUSES	
EGO (WORKER)	◪	THEIR DESCENDANTS	
MALE HEAD	Ø		
DOMESTIC GROUP	═══		
FAMILY UNITS	* * * *		
NO SPOUSE	/		

---

nucleus..."

Besides, they considered themselves responsible for "taking care of them" and sharing some of the domestic chores with their mother to compensate for the help that she gave them by looking after their children while they were working outside the home.

The following is the scheme with the family arrangement described above. The solid line contains the domestic units it is usually conceived. The lines of stars represent the family units according to the methodology described. The diagram shows that even if this domestic group is headed by a man, it could be subdivided into four family units; one of these (I) headed by a man, but the other three (II, III, IV) headed by women.

In Table No. 14, the list of the frequencies and the percentages of the domestic arrangements found in the mentioned sample is listed. They are organized based on the number of family units. In Table 15, the results of multiplying the number of frequencies of the domestic groups by the number of family units enclosed in each one are shown.

Twelve of the 17 (75%) diverse co-resident arrangements found with this method corresponded to domestic units that would have been catalogued as only "extended." This method allows one to register the way in which the extension is taking place more explicitly.

But the most important advantage of this latter method of grouping co-resident arrangements is that it is was capable of quantifying the number of family units headed by women that would have been "hidden" if the groups had been considered only as extended (Table No. 16).

TABLE No. 14.
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF DOMESTIC GROUPS BY FAMILY UNITS.

SINGLE FAMILY UNITS	n	%
NUCLEAR *	60	40.3
HEADED BY A WOMAN **	13	8.7
NUCLEAR PLUS RELATIVES *	26	17.4
HEADED BY A WOMAN PLUS RELATIVES **	5	3.3
TWO FAMILY UNITS		
COMPLETE *	14	9.4
2 COMPLETE PLUS RELATIVES *	2	1.3
1 COMPLETE & 1 WOMAN HEADED ***	10	6.7
1 COMPLETE & 1 WOMAN HEADED PLUS RELATIVES ***	2	1.3
2 HEADED BY WOMEN **	4	2.7
THREE FAMILY UNITS		
COMPLETE *	3	2.0
2 COMPLETE & 1 WOMAN HEADED ***	4	2.7
1 COMPLETE & 2 WOMEN HEADED ***	1	0.7
FOUR FAMILY UNITS		
1 COMPLETE & 3 WOMEN HEADED ***	1	0.7
2 COMPLETE & 2 WOMEN HEADED ***	1	0.7
WITHOUT NUCLEAR COMPONENT		
SIBLINGS, WITHOUT PARENTS *	1	0.7
SIBLINGS, WITHOUT PARENTS PLUS RELATIVES *	1	0.7
FEMALE WORKER WHO LIVES WITH A *COMADRE* & THE COMADRE'S FAMILY	1	0.7
TOTAL	149	100.0

* There are no family units headed by women.
** The family units headed by women are "visible."
*** The family units headed by women are "hidden" in the family units headed by a man.

When several family units share a house, if there is a man in one of them, he would be considered the household head either because he is the main economic contributor to the household budget, or because the members of the household considered him as such, or through a combination of these two criteria.

When classifying a household as extended, headed by a man, the women that extended their domestic units sharing the daily life with family units where there is a male head are "hidden." That is, the anthropological and socio-demographic conventional methods are under-estimating the number of women heads.[5]

Instead, by counting the number of family units in each co-resident group and deciding if they are complete or headed only by a man or a woman, the total number of woman heads (visible and hidden) in extended domestic groups headed by men, can be clearly established. For example, in the 149 domestic groups of garment factory workers, multiplying the frequencies of each type of domestic unit by the number of family units it contains, a total of 203 family units is obtained (Table No. 14). From this, in 64.0% there are no family units headed by women (*); in 12.9% (**) the family units headed by women would have been detected by any conventional method, but a very important 23.1% (***) are family units headed by women that would not have been registered with the usual typologies.

In Table No. 16 the number of women heads is presented. A fourth of the total family units from the sample are headed by women (51 out of 203, 25.1%). Taking this 51 as the 100%, in 51.0% there are clearly female heads. But half of the family units headed by women (49.0%) are hidden in extended household where there is a

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[5]The anthropologic practice uses these two criteria, or their combination, to determinate who is the head.

TABLE No. 15.
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF FAMILY UNITS.

SINGLE FAMILY UNITS	n	%
NUCLEAR *	60	29.5
HEADED BY A WOMAN **	13	6.4
NUCLEAR PLUS RELATIVES *	26	12.8
HEADED BY A WOMAN PLUS RELATIVES **	5	2.5
TWO FAMILY UNITS		
COMPLETE *	28	13.8
2 COMPLETE PLUS RELATIVES *	4	2.0
1 COMPLETE & 1 WOMAN HEADED ***	20	9.8
1 COMPLETE & 1 WOMAN HEADED PLUS RELATIVES ***	4	2.0
2 HEADED BY WOMEN **	8	4.0
THREE FAMILY UNITS		
COMPLETE *	9	4.4
2 COMPLETE & 1 WOMAN HEADED ***	12	5.9
1 COMPLETE & 2 WOMEN HEADED ***	3	1.4
FOUR FAMILY UNITS		
1 COMPLETE & 3 WOMEN HEADED ***	4	2.0
2 COMPLETE & 2 WOMEN HEADED ***	4	2.0
WITHOUT NUCLEAR COMPONENT		
SIBLINGS, WITHOUT PARENTS *	1	0.5
SIBLINGS, WITHOUT PARENTS PLUS RELATIVES *	1	0.5
FEMALE WORKER WHO LIVES WITH A *COMADRE* & THE COMADRE'S FAMILY	1	0.5
TOTAL	203	100.0

* There are no family units headed by women.
** The family units headed by women are "visible."
*** The family units headed by women are "hidden" in the family units headed by a man.

TABLE No. 16.
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE HEADS OF FAMILY UNITS.

SINGLE FAMILY UNITS	n	%
NUCLEAR *	0	0.0
HEADED BY A WOMAN **	13	25.5
NUCLEAR PLUS RELATIVES *	0	0.0
HEADED BY A WOMAN PLUS RELATIVES **	5	9.8
TWO FAMILY UNITS		
COMPLETE *	0	0.0
2 COMPLETE PLUS RELATIVES *	0	0.0
1 COMPLETE & 1 WOMAN HEADED ***	10	19.6
1 COMPLETE & 1 WOMAN HEADED PLUS RELATIVES ***	2	4.0
2 HEADED BY WOMEN **	8	15.7
THREE FAMILY UNITS		
COMPLETE *	0	0.0
2 COMPLETE & 1 WOMAN HEADED ***	4	7.8
1 COMPLETE & 2 WOMEN HEADED ***	2	4.0
FOUR FAMILY UNITS		
1 COMPLETE & 3 WOMEN HEADED ***	3	5.9
2 COMPLETE & 2 WOMEN HEADED ***	2	4.0
WITHOUT NUCLEAR COMPONENT		
SIBLINGS, WITHOUT PARENTS *	0	0.0
SIBLINGS, WITHOUT PARENTS PLUS RELATIVES *	0	0.0
FEMALE WORKER WHO LIVES WITH A *COMADRE* & THE COMADRE'S FAMILY	0	0.0
TOTAL	51	99.6

* There are no family units headed by women.
** The family units headed by women are "visible."
*** The family units headed by women are "hidden" in the family units headed by a man.

male head. If these figures were generalized, there would be an under-estimation of 50% in the number of female heads in the Mexican population.

Here as a woman head of a family unit, every woman who had at least a co-resident son or daughter (child or adult) and no spouse was included. However, some of these women did not work for a wage and were supported by their daughters or sons, co-residents or not. Thus, to make this methodology more precise it is necessary to take into account issues of self-identity and find out if they are considered and/or consider themselves household heads. It would also be important to know if the members of the household considered her as head giving her a role in decision making. However, these matters were not investigated during the field work. For example, a home-based ironer lived with her 14-year-old daughter; her husband worked as a peasant and lived in the *hacienda* they were from. Several blocks away from the house was his married son; he did not contribute to his mother's household budget, but when asked, the worker said he was the head of her household.

For home-based workers the equivalent information is summarized on Table No. 17., 84.6% of all home-based workers' domestic groups were complete or complete plus relatives. If this figure is added up to women headed domestic groups, nuclear arrangements account for 89.2% of home-based laborers' co-resident groups. Thus, clearly, the great majority of home-based workers were living in nuclear arrangements.

Using these 150 domestic groups to calculate the number of family units they included the result was = 169. Eighty nine point three percent of these 169 family units were complete, 17 (10.0%) were women headed and 1 (0.6%) was male-headed

(a man who had no co-resident spouse). Within the 17 women headed family units almost half were hidden in male domestic groups (8, 47.0%).

Regarding domestic groups and family units within them, this panorama is very different than the one described for factory workers where nuclear single arrangements accounted for 57.9% of the whole sample (86.4% is the equivalent

TABLE No. 17.
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGES OF DOMESTIC GROUPS BY FAMILY UNITS, HOME-BASED WORKERS.

FAMILY UNITS	n	%
SINGLE FAMILY UNITS		
NUCLEAR	111	74.0
WOMAN HEADED	4	2.6
NUCLEAR PLUS RELATIVES	16	10.6
WOMAN HEADED PLUS RELATIVES	3	2.0
TWO FAMILY UNITS		
COMPLETE	7	4.6
1 COMPLETE & 1 WOMAN HEADED PLUS RELATIVES	1	.6
1 WOMAN HEADED & 1 MALE HEADED	1	.6
2 WOMEN HEADED	2	1.4
THREE FAMILY UNITS		
2 COMPLETE & 1 WOMAN HEADED	3	2.0
1 COMPLETE & 2 WOMEN HEADED	1	.6
FOUR FAMILY UNITS		
2 COMPLETE & 2 WOMEN HEADED	1	.6
TOTAL	150	99.5

TABLE No. 18
MEMBERS OF MULTIPLE-GARMENT-WORKER-HOUSEHOLDS
(THE *PROPOSITUS* IS A HOME-BASED WORKER).

NUMBER	RELATIVES INVOLVED IN THE GARMENT INDUSTRY
003	SISTER SISTER (HOME-BASED)
009	ONLY WIFE HUSBAND (HOME-BASED GARMENT ASSEMBLER) BOTH WORKED FOR THE SAME FACTORY
021	WIFE AND MOTHER HUSBAND (GARMENT FACTORY EMPLOYEE)
026	WIFE AND MOTHER DAUGHTER (FACTORY) DAUGHTER (FACTORY) DAUGHTER (FACTORY) (HEARING IMPAIRED)
031	WIFE MOTHER DAUGHTER (FACTORY, SHE WAS DIVORCED BUT HAD NO CHILDREN)
036	WIFE AND MOTHER SON (HOME-BASED EMBROIDER, BORN IN SOTUTA)
043	WIFE AND MOTHER HUSBAND (CUTTER) BOTH WORKED FOR THE SAME FACTORY
052	WIFE AND MOTHER HUSBAND (HOME-BASED EMBROIDERER, BORN IN MANI)
063	WIFE AND MOTHER DAUGHTER (FACTORY)
074	WIFE AND MOTHER HUSBAND (HOME-BASED *GUAYABERA* ASSEMBLER) BOTH WORKED TOGETHER
110	WIFE AND MOTHER DAUGHTER (FACTORY)
125	WIFE AND MOTHER HUSBAND'S NIECE (FACTORY)
132	WIFE AND MOTHER DAUGHTER (FACTORY)

complete, 17 (10.0%) were women headed and 1 (0.6%) was male-headed (a man who had no co-resident spouse). Within the 17 women headed family units almost half were hidden in male domestic groups (8, 47.0%).

Regarding domestic groups and family units within them, this panorama is very different than the one described for factory workers where nuclear single arrangements accounted for 57.9% of the whole sample (86.4% is the equivalent figure for home-based households) and 36% of all the family units were women headed (10% is the respective figure for home-based workers). Hence, factory workers' households in contrast with those of outworkers' were: a) more frequently extended, b) had within them more women with single offspring and no spouse and c) the "extension" was done though 13 different arrangements (the equivalent figure for home-based domestic groups was 7).

Multiple Workers Co-resident Groups

In this section the analysis of households with more than one garment worker will be presented. When the field work began, the existence of these households was not considered. However, multiple workers households confirm the importance of personal relations to get into the garment industry. They also confirm the importance of this economic branch for women. Within these domestic groups mothers and daughters, daughters with their sisters, husbands and wives and even a mother and a son were found manufacturing garments together.

Eleven percent (n=33) of all the households in the sample were "specialized" in garment production with various men and women involved in the industry. The existence of these multiple-garment-worker domestic groups made the "n" between

TABLE No. 19.
MEMBERS OF MULTIPLE GARMENT WORKERS HOUSEHOLDS
(THE *PROPOSITUS* IS A FACTORY WORKER).

NUMBER	WORKERS IN THE HOUSEHOLD
162	SISTER SISTER (FACTORY)
153	SISTER SISTER (FACTORY)
157	SISTER SISTER (FACTORY)
162	SISTER SISTER (FACTORY)
195	SISTER SISTER (FACTORY)
170	SISTER SISTER (FACTORY)
176	SISTER SISTER (FACTORY)
178	HOUSEHOLD HEAD (SEPARATED) DAUGHTER (HOME-BASED, HEARING IMPAIRED)
195	HOUSEHOLD HEAD (WIDOW) DAUGHTER (FACTORY)
195	WIFE AND MOTHER SISTER-IN-LAW (FACTORY)
223	SISTER SISTER (FACTORY)
228	SISTER SISTER (FACTORY)
238	SISTER SISTER (FACTORY)
239	SISTER SISTER (FACTORY)
240	SISTER SISTER (FACTORY)

TABLE No. 19 (CONTINUED...)	
NUMBER	WORKERS IN THE HOUSEHOLD
241	SISTER SISTER (FACTORY)
242	SISTER SISTER (FACTORY) SISTER (FACTORY) SISTER (FACTORY)
245	SISTER SISTER (FACTORY) SISTER (FACTORY)
246	SISTER SISTER (FACTORY) SISTER (FACTORY) SISTER (FACTORY)
247	SISTER SISTER (FACTORY)
248	SISTER SISTER (FACTORY) SISTER (FACTORY)
267	SISTER SISTER (FACTORY)
268	SISTER SISTER (FACTORY)
276	DAUGHTER MOTHER (HOME-BASED)
277	SISTER SISTER (FACTORY)
281	WIFE AND MOTHER (DESIGNER) HUSBAND (CUTTER). THEY BOTH WORK AT THE SAME PLACE
293	SISTER SISTER (FACTORY) SISTER (FACTORY) SISTER (FACTORY)
296	WIFE HUSBAND (CUTTER)

workers characteristics and household information different. The number of apparel workers in each co-resident group is shown in Tables No. 18 and No. 19. Table No. 18 registers for each multiple garment home-based worker's co-resident group the number of members involved in garment manufacturing. The first member listed is the *propositus* (the worker interviewed). Table No. 19 refers to multiple garment workers' households where the interviewed woman was a factory worker.

Since the existence of multiple workers households was not considered when the interviews began, the information about the working conditions of 11 female apparel workers sharing the house with the outfit laborer considered the *propositus* was ignored. Thus, only data of 331 female garment workers whose working conditions could be understood were included in the sample.

As Table No. 18 shows, in the home-based workers' co-resident groups there were three where both husband and wife worked together as out-laborers. In two cases former tailors and their wives were assembling *guayaberas* and slacks and in the other the spouses were embroidering. In fact, in these three cases women considered that the workers were their husbands and that they were only "helping them." This was due to the following facts:

a) Men were previously skilled

b) during the workday women stopped sewing to cope with household chores, to take and pick up their children from school, help them with homework, etc. and

c) men were the ones who contacted the intermediaries, received and returned the finished material and got paid.

In another household there was a son performing home-based embroidering as his main economic activity. His mother had taught him to use a semi-industrial sewing machine to do such a task and she stated that he learned quickly and was pretty good at it. In the two cases where a home-based worker was married to a factory employee, the husband played the role of intermediary.

The two men skilled in embroidering were from the countryside (Maní and Sotuta). Within the Mayan communities embroidering and sewing is perfectly accepted as a man's task, although it is mainly done by women. For example, Kimbilá (a town located in the *henequen's* zone) is "specialized" in assembling slacks and embroidering and assembling *hipiles*.[6] While walking around the town the sound of the sewing machines working can be heard almost everywhere; for many men there sewing slacks is their main economic activity.

There was a co-resident group with the mother as a home-based worker for an intermediary while her three daughters (including one hearing impaired) worked in a garment factory. In one case, two sisters assembled for the same factory at their homes so they could continue studying. In the rest of the multiple household where the *propositus* was an out-laborer, as expected, the mother was a home-based worker so she could look after the house while her daughters worked as regular factory employees.

Within the multiple-factory-garment worker co-resident groups (Table No. 18), the predominant arrangement was that of several sisters working for the same factory. This was congruent with the fact that personal networks were the most common way

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[6]Mayan women's regional typical clothing.

of being recruited into apparel manufacturing and that young women were more likely to work as regular factory employees.

However, within factory workers there were also several mother-daughter links and in two cases the sharing of economic activity was between wives and husbands. It is important to notice that in these latter cases the husbands earned more than their spouses. Cutters were better paid because in apparel manufacturing it is accepted that cutting is a skilled activity because it needs strength and ability; therefore it is compensated with a higher wage.

As stated before, multiple garment workers households highlighted how important networking was to get into the apparel labor force. They also made evident that relative to the local job opportunities reserved for women, garment manufacturing in either fashion was a fairly good option for them. Through these households analysis men involved in apparel manufacturing were found. These men were usually better paid because they were carrying out the better paid activities like slack assembling. Furthermore, as home-based laborers, their socially constructed identity as main breadwinners guaranteed them the chance to work a whole workday without interruption. A situation that was never true for female home-based laborers.

In summary: This study dealt only with information regarding co-resident groups. The domestic functions carried out outside the group of residence were not taken into account. It was also pointed out that domestic groups are very important spaces for the construction of a female identity. Through kinship women (and other household members) are positioned in the kinship system by gender and generation. At the same time kinship situates them in a power structure and determines their rights and obligations in the household an the overall society.

From a life course analysis perspective, the position of the women in their households is a synthesis of the "historical time," their "family time" and their "personal time" The identity of "daughters," "sisters," "wives," "wives and mothers" and "household heads" is influenced by social values, historic situations, their personal life cycle and their family life cycle.

Many female "household heads" (particularly in the factory workers group) were found in extended households where a man was considered the head. Dealing with household composition, to capture these women a new typology was constructed. This typology was based on the family units included in each domestic group, and its major goal was to count as female heads those working women who were living with their children in a male headed co-resident group. Besides, using this procedure the concrete forms in which residential groups extend can be determined.

Worker's Households Main Trends

It has been demonstrated before that there was a clear labor segregation between home-based and factory labor, with home-based labor having worse working conditions. On the other hand, "daughters" and "household heads" predominated in factories, while "wives and mothers" were segregated into domiciliary work and "wives" were seldom part of the garment manufacturing labor force. The two "sisters" found in the sample made evident that in Mexico parents and their single offspring live together whenever possible. Thus, the data has demonstrated that the female labor market is far from being homogeneous and that women with same skills ended up in worse or better jobs in relation to their position in the households. Hence, it can be concluded that dealing with female workers the domestic group is a better unit of

analysis, rather than women in isolation and their individual socio-demographic characteristics. This is true because kinship and household dynamics are in fact flexible structures made out of personal relations in constant interaction. In this sense, households are crucial spaces in the constitution of individual identities which have an enormous influence on personal choices.

TABLE No. 20
FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF WORKERS INVOLVED ON DOMESTIC CHORES

		WASH-ING	COOK-ING	DISHES	CLEAN-ING	GROCE-RIES
DAUGHTERS	HOME-BASED n=7				2 28.6%	2 28.6%
	FACTORY n=65			1 1.5%	1 1.5%	1 1.5%
WIVES	HOME-BASED n=6	6 100.0%	5 83.3%	4 66.6%	5 83.3%	4 66.6%
	FACTORY n=6	3 50.0%	2 33.3%	2 33.3%	2 33.3%	1 16.6%
WIVES & MOTHER	HOME-BASED n=127	104 81.9%	115 90.5%	88 69.2%	88 69.2%	101 79.5%
	FACTORY n=65	40 61.5%	33 50.7%	23 35.4%	27 41.5%	30 46.2%
HOUSE-HOLD HEADS	HOME-BASED n=13	10 77.0%	11 84.6%	10 77.0%	10 77.0%	10 77.0%
	FACTORY n=40	10 25.0%	8 20.0%	2 5.0%	5 12.5%	5 12.5%

Note: percentages based on n=

As expected, for women these personal "choices" are closely attached to their household responsibilities and the possibility to count on other women (co-resident or not) to cope with domestic chores. Table No. 20 shows that "daughters" were the only group of women who had little involvement on domestic tasks and that female home-based workers consistently did more household chores if compared with their factory counterparts.

To capture closely household dynamics and its changes as it embeds to women's own lives courses, a subsample of 105 women from the original sample of 331 workers (153 home-based and 178 factory laborers) was interviewed again between 1991 and 1992. For the second field work at first the selection of workers to be re-interviewed was done at random. However, many of the selected workers could not be reached and they were substituted by almost any other women holding the same position in the co-resident group. Besides, efforts were made to re-contact all "wives" in both groups and all home-based "household heads." The same was true for single mothers and female main economic providers on the factory workers group. The original sample of these groups was small and a percentage of it would not have been enough to trace major trends in these women's lives. As a result, the percentage of women interviewed in each group differs. The above reasons led to the fact that, from a statistical point of view, the 1991-92 subsample had biases. The number of women interviewed in both field works and the percentage that the re-interviewed subsample represents from the original group is presented in Table No. 21.

Besides, in the data of the subsample the standard deviation around the mean for household members, economic contributors, economic dependents and household

income was enormous. According to Norusis (1986:259), even if there are notorious differences between the means of the groups, these differences are not statistically significant if there is much variation within the groups. For all the above reasons, I

TABLE No. 21
FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN INTERVIEWED IN 1985-86 AND RE-INTERVIEWED IN 1991-92

	HOME-BASED		FACTORY		TOTAL	
POSITION	1985	1991	1985	1991	1985	1991
DAUGHTERS	7	5 28.6%	65	19 29.2%	72	24 33.3%
SISTERS	0	0	2	0	2	0
WIVES	6	5 83.3%	6	4 66.6%	12	9 75.0%
WIVES & MOTHERS	127	22 17.3%	65	18 27.7%	192	40 20.8%
HOUSEHOLD HEADS	13	11 84.6%	40	21 52.5%	53	32 60.4%
TOTAL	153	43 28.1%	178	62 34.8%	331	105 31.7%

NOTE: The first row of numbers refers to absolute frequencies.
The second row refers to the percentage of the original sample that was re-interviewed.

consider women reached in the second interviews anthropological case studies, rather than a subsample in statistical terms. However, these case studies are useful to trace main trends. In the following paragraphs, the dominant changes in women's position in their households, their primary occupations and their household composition are addressed.

TABLE No. 22 POSITION IN THE HOUSEHOLD IN 1991-92 OF THE RE-INTERVIEWED WOMEN								
	DAUGHTERS 1991-92		WIVES 1991-92		WIVES & MOTHERS 1991-92		HOUSEHOLD HEADS 1991-92	
1985-86:	H	F	H	F	H	F	H	F
DAUGHTERS	4	4			1	15		
WIVES			2	3	3	1		
WIVES & MOTHERS					22	16	2	
HOUSEHOLD HEADS		1			3	5	8	15
TOTAL = 105	4	5	2	3	29	37	10	15

Women's position in the household

Five home-based daughters were re-interviewed, with the exception of one worker, they were still single and engaged in becoming skilled or working as professionals already. In contrast, from the 19 factory working daughters, four were single and 15 were married and with children.

In the group of 5 home-based wives, 2 did not have children and 3 were mothers by the second interviews. Only one of the 4 re-interviewed factory wives was a mother, the rest were classified as wives again. All the 22 re-interviewed factory wives and mothers were classified in this category again in 1991-92, but 2 of the 18 former factory wives and mothers had become household heads, their spouses had "abandoned them."

From the 11 re-interviewed home-based household heads, 3 were wives and mothers by the second interviews and from the 21 factory household heads, 5 were

wives and mothers and 1 an unemployed daughter. Hence, regarding position in the households former factory daughters were the group that changed the most, followed by that of factory household heads.

TABLE No. 23
FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF WOMEN'S OCCUPATION WHEN RE-INTERVIEWED

OCCUPA-TION	DAUGHTER		WIVES		WIVES & MOTHERS		HOUSE-HOLD HEADS		TOTAL	
	H	F	H	F	H	F	H	F	H	F
STILL GARMENT WORKER	0	3 16%	2 40%	3 75%	2 9%	4 22%	2 18%	10 48%	6 14%	20 32%
WORKING OUTSIDE HOME	4* 80%	0	0	0	4 18%	1 6%	6 55%	2 9%	14 32%	3 5%
WORKING AT HOME	0	4 21%	0	1 25%	8 36%	6 33%	3 27%	4 19%	11 25%	15 24%
FULL-TIME HOUSE-WIVES	1 20%	12 63%	3 60%	0	8 36%	7 39%	0	5 24%	12 28%	24 39%
TOTAL	5 100	19 100	5 100	4	22 99	18 100	11 100	21 100	43 99	62 100

* = CARRYING AN ACTIVITY OUTSIDE THEIR HOMES
H = HOME-BASED WORKER IN 1985-86
F = FACTORY WORKER IN 1991-92

Occupation

Few women were still garment workers by the second interview. Three factory daughters, 2 home-based wives, three factory wives, 2 home-based wives and

mothers, 4 factory wives and mothers, 2 household heads and 10 factory household heads. Predominantly factory household heads were the ones that remained in the garment industry labor force. They account for half of all the factory workers that did not stop working for this industry (Table No. 23).

Fourteen ex-home-based workers had changed jobs but were found working outside their homes. The same was true for 3 ex-factory laborers. Eleven ex-home-based employees were not involved with the garment industry but remained working at home, 6 of this women said that they would have liked to continue working as domiciliary piece-workers for the apparel industry, but work became scarce about two years before the interviews (*el trabajo ha escaseado mucho).* They did not picture themselves as having been fired. Fifteen ex-factory workers in 1991-92 were also found working but inside their homes. This shift was mainly due to 6 wives and mothers and 4 household heads that switched to an economic activity that could be done at home.

Twelve ex-domiciliary piece workers and 24 ex-factory employees had become full-time housewives. Twelve factory daughters and 8 home-based wives and mothers dropped-out of the EAP.

The above information led to the conclusion that regarding principal occupation major changes were found during the second interviews. Only the group first classified as home-based household heads remained completely in paid work.

Household composition

Using sign test, a non parametric procedure for paired samples to calculate P values, there were no statistical differences in the domestic groups' composition

between the first and the second interviews. However, with the exception of the home-based wives, there was a tendency in all groups to have less members by 1991-92. The same was true for economic contributors, with the exception of the home-based household heads. The means for economic contributors in both periods made evident that a strategy of survival of multiple wage earners was present in Merida. In average there was no group with less than two economic contributors. Economic dependents also reduced in average in all groups but wives.

The dependency ratio indicates how many dependents were present for each contributor, no clear pattern was observed. The dependency ratio was fairly similar for wives and mothers in both groups and periods, it went up in the factory wives, slightly up in the home-based wives and lessened in the other groups. Hence, the predominant trend was to incorporate more members into the labor force, but with these data it is difficult to tell if this trend was caused by individual and domestic cycles or the impact of the crisis. However, these ratios led to the conclusion that when other members in the household reached the labor force, garment workers dropped-out from it.

A figure for calculating household income was constructed. First, the total household income was divided by its members to determine the household *per capita income. In second place, the per capita* minimum legal wage for each year researched was established, dividing the general minimum legal wage by 5 (the mean members of Mexican households). In third place, the *per capita* household income was divided by the *per capita* minimum legal wage to establish how many minimum general *per capita* wages each household had. Finally, the results were averaged by groups of workers.

TABLE No. 24.
HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION IN 1985-86 AND 1991-92

WOMEN'S POSITION	TYPE OF WORKER	YEAR	I	II	III	IV	V
DAUGHTERS	HOME-BASED	1985	11.25	4.25	5.00	1.17	0.60
		1991	5.70	2.00	3.75	1.87	1.10
	FACTORY	1985	7.55	3.61	3.72	1.03	3.45
		1991	5.33	2.27	1.96	0.86	2.50
WIVES	HOME-BASED	1985	5.40	3.00	2.40	0.80	1.40
		1991	6.80	2.80	4.00	1.42	1.80
	FACTORY	1985	5.00	2.80	1.60	0.57	3.70
		1991	3.80	2.00	1.80	0.90	2.05
WIVES & MOTHERS	HOME-BASED	1985	6.09	2.68	3.36	1.25	1.50
		1991	5.63	2.54	3.09	1.21	2.40
	FACTORY	1985	6.38	2.94	3.33	1.13	2.10
		1991	5.66	2.61	3.05	1.16	2.10
HOUSEHOLD HEADS	HOME-BASED	1985	6.63	2.36	4.18	1.70	1.20
		1991	5.36	3.00	2.36	0.80	2.70
	FACTORY	1985	6.09	2.19	3.61	1.60	1.70
		1991	4.80	2.09	2.80	1.30	2.40

I = HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS MEAN
II = ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTORS MEAN
III = ECONOMIC DEPENDENTS MEAN
IV = DEPENDENCY RATIO
V = TIMES THE MINIMUN LEGAL PER CARPITA INCOME (GENERAL MINIMUM LEGAL WAGE/5).

From the resulting figures only the households of the factory wives and the factory daughters were worse in 1991-92 than in 1985-86; factory wives and mothers

remained the same in both periods and the rest of the groups were better off economically by the second interview. However, if the minimum legal wage is a good parameter for comparison to deal with the fact that the interviews were done at four different periods, the salary control imposed by the government to the minimum legal wage has reduced its purchasing power. Thus, more minimum legal salaries does not imply mechanically a better economic situation, as used here is just a parameter for comparison.

In synthesis: The macroeconomic trends going on in Mexico (especially the economic crisis and the government's structural adjustment policies) outlined in Chapter No. 2; the specificities of the economic development of Yucatan (signified first by intensive sisal production and then by the collapse of this crop) which was also outlined in Chapter No. 2; the working conditions in the garment industry described in Chapters No. 3 and No. 4 and the worker's household dynamics interacted to shape women's lives and identities, a point that was addressed theoretically in the first part of this Chapter.

Major trends regarding women's position in the household, main economic activities and household dynamics were described at the end of this Chapter. However, to understand anthropologically these general trends, the following Chapters will analyze in detail the situation for each group of workers.

Chapters Nos. 6 to 9 include for each of the five major groups constructed, the basic information of the 1985-86 female garment workers interviewed and their basic life changes accounted for in the 1991-92 interviews. Since there were only two working "sisters," the information about them was included at the end of Chapter No. 6. Chapter No. 7 focuses on working "wives," Chapter No. 8 on working "wives and

mothers" and Chapter No. 9 on working "household heads." These four Chapters have the same structure: First, the information regarding workers distribution between home-based and factory labor, their household composition and their involvement on domestic chores is presented. Secondly, the socio-demographic characteristics of the interviewed women are described. Then the data gathered in the second interviews is discussed, first focusing on home-based workers and then on factory laborers. A case study in each group is included to better understand women's lives through time. This analysis recognizes that:

> Individuals develop at different paces and assume a variety of roles over their lifetime. Their entry into and exit from such roles and the accompanying changes within the family unit are subject to biological (processes), as well as to changing social and economic conditions (Hareven, 1978:1).

CHAPTER 6
WORKING DAUGHTERS

General Information

In 1985-86 the proportion of factory workers classified as daughters was nine times greater than their proportion in home-based work. Thus, factory employment clearly predominated among daughters (ratio 7:65). The 7 daughters working as home-based workers could be considered special cases. Three were working as home-based laborers because of the flexibility it involved. They were studying and, consequently, working at a factory for a fixed work day would not have been possible for them. Another woman used to be a factory worker but she was run over by a bus and her mobility seriously diminished. Thus, with her employer's support, she became a home-based worker. Two women said simply that working at home was "more comfortable" and another preferred home-based labor because of "the lack of pressure."

As Table No. 25 shows, 4 of the 6 home-based workers daughter's households were nuclear, the same was true for 57.5% of the daughter's domestic groups working at factories. Of the extended co-resident groups, home-based workers had only two different arrangements, while factory laborers distributed between seven.

Multiplying the number of domestic groups by the number of family units they had, there were 10 family units in the 6 co-resident groups of the home-based

TABLE No. 25.
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF FAMILY UNITS.
(DAUGHTERS).

FAMILY UNITS	HOME-BASED		FACTORY	
SINGLE FAMILY UNITS	n	%	n	%
NUCLEAR	4	66.6	23	57.5
HEADED BY A WOMAN			1	2.5
NUCLEAR PLUS RELATIVES			5	12.5
HEADED BY A WOMAN PLUS RELATIVES			2	5.0
TWO FAMILY UNITS				
COMPLETE	1	16.7	4 1	10.0
1 COMPLETE & 1 WOMAN HEADED			2	2.5
2 HEADED BY WOMEN				5.0
THREE FAMILY UNITS				
COMPLETE			2	5.0
FOUR FAMILY UNITS				
2 COMPLETE & 2 WOMEN HEADED	1	16.7		
TOTAL	6	100.0	40	100.0

* There are no family units headed by women.
** The family units headed by women are "visible."
*** The family units headed by women are "hidden" in the family units headed by a man.

workers. Only two were women headed and one of these two female headed family units belong to a garment worker. In the factory worker's group there were 51 family units, 16 (31.4%) were women headed and 8 belong to garment workers, (formed by the worker's mother and the worker's single brothers and sisters). In these 8 domestic groups women's incorporation into the labor force was necessary as a means to "help" their mothers with household expenses, a fifth (20%) of all the

daughters working in factories lived in women headed family units. This fact could not had been found out using conventional methods for analyzing household composition.

As shown before (Table No. 20), daughters even when working at their homes were not "responsible" of domestic chores. However, a third of all the daughters "helped" out mainly cleaning the house and buying groceries. As expected, their mothers were the ones "responsible" for housework. The "responsibility" issue regarding domestic chores is important in constructing a female identity. It is different to be collaborative and "help out" than to be considered the one with the obligation, which is usually imposed to and accepted by wives and/or mothers. However, the "help" of young daughters on household chores on the one hand seems to be a way of training them to do it properly, and on the other it plays a role making them picture themselves being "responsible" of household duties when married, just as their mothers, married sisters and sisters-in-law.

The distribution of the reasons given by "daughters" for working as factory laborers (Table No. 26) confirms that most single women without children preferred going to a plant because wages were better (n=33, 50.76%). This figure could be added to the 4 (6.15%) who besides needing wages also worried about fringe benefits,[1] the worker who declared she needed the money (1.53%) and the 3 (4.61%) laborers who said they could concentrate better at the plant (concentration speeded up their production rate because they were usually paid by the piece). Consequently, 63.05% of the factory workers labored outside their homes because their lack of involvement with domestic chores allowed them to seek for a better payment. There

[1]It is also important to notice that few daughters worried about fringe benefits.

were 9 workers (13.84%) who openly declared that they work at a factory just to get away from home and avoid getting "bored" (*en la casa me fastidio*).

Hence, the presence of daughters in factories was basically possible because they could easily leave their homes for an entire work day since they were not mainly responsible for domestic chores. Worker's mothers were the ones that did most of the housework. Cooking and shopping seemed to be an "obligation" of the female "head." However, the interviews made clear that both tasks are closely related. This apparent obligation derived from the fact that cooks preferred to buy groceries themselves, it is better for them to decide in the grocery store the quality and quantity of needed goods. Washing clothes appeared to be a splint duty: several factory workers were in charge of washing their own garments and sisters-in-law washed the clothes of the members of their own family units (husband, offspring and their own). House cleaning was also more or less distributed among the female members, males did not participate in household chores at all.

As Table No. 26 shows, daughters worked in all size firms, but almost three-quarters were involved in large and medium sized enterprises (73%), which more often gave better salaries and fringe benefits. In fact only 9.5% of the factory daughters were clearly part of the informal sector laboring in sweatshops.[2] In addition to apparel manufacturing, several working daughters were doing another economic activity. Two (28.6%) home-based workers embroidered, knitted or handcrafted hammocks. Three factory workers (4.6%) were seamstresses, 3 embroidered (4.6%) and 1 (1.55%) was also a home-based worker.

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[2]Sweatshops were considered factory labor. In Merida they are organized as clandestine small factories. They are not installed at their owners homes and its laborers have fixed workdays.

TABLE No. 26.
REASONS FOR WORKING AT FACTORIES.
DAUGHTERS.

REASONS	n	%
LACK OF OWN MACHINE	2	3.07
LACK OF INDUSTRIAL MACHINE	3	4.61
BETTER CONCENTRATION	3	4.61
MORE MONEY	33	50.76
COMFORT	2	3.07
LEARNS MORE IN A FACTORY	2	3.07
THEY EMPLOYED HER THERE	4	6.15
FRINGE BENEFITS & BETTER PAY	4	6.15
ONLY KNOWS TO ASSEMBLE	2	3.07
TO GET OUT OF THE HOUSE	9	13.84
NECESSITY	1	1.53
TOTAL	65	99.93

Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Working Daughters

Needless to say, daughters were young; their average age was 20.9 (S.D. 5.04) and 21.3 (S.D. 5.85) for home-based and factory laborers, respectively. The difference between both groups was not significant at the .05 level.

Regarding education, two daughters employed as home-based workers were grade school drop-outs, two were middle school drop-outs and three were still attending school. Factory workers were not going to school anymore, but they were fairly well-educated: none were illiterate, 14 (21.5%) had not finished grade school, 25 (38.5%) had only completed grade school, 17 (26.2%) were middle school drop-outs,

6 (9.2%) had finished middle school, 1 (1.5%) had concluded commercial studies and 2 (3.1%) had finished high school.

TABLE No. 27.
FACTORY BY TYPE OF WORKERS.
DAUGHTERS.

FACTORY SIZE	HOME-BASED	FACTORY	ROW TOTAL
LARGE		12 100.0 19.0	12 17.1
MEDIUM-SIZED	4 10.5 57.1	34 89.5 54.0	38 54.3
SMALL		11 100.0 17.5	11 15.7
SWEATSHOP		6 100.0 9.5	6 8.6
BROKER	3 100.0 42.9		3 4.3
COLUMN TOTAL	7 10.0	63 90.0	70 100.0

MISSING CASES = 2

From the group of home-based workers, three women were born in Merida and four in the countryside. Among the factory workers, 30 (46.2%) were born in Merida, 33 (50.8%) in the countryside and 2 (3.1%) out of the state. Thus, even when young, almost half of the workers in both groups were from the countryside. This proportion between women from urban and rural origins was not rare since the sisal crisis had

increased migration into the city (especially into the *colonias where the interviews were carried out, located in the suburban area).*[3] This figure highlights regional aspects of women's incorporation into paid work, young factory female workers are reported to be predominantly from an urban origin elsewhere.

For the totality of the daughters employed as home-based workers, apparel manufacturing was their first paid job. The same was true for 75.4% (n=49) of the factory laborers. For the remaining factory workers 2 women had their first working experience in a cordelería[4] (3.1%), 4 (6.2%) had been maids, 1 (1.5%) had been a factory worker (not in the garment industry), 5 (7.7%) had worked in the service sector, 3 (4.6%) had been home-based garment workers and 1 had worked at a beauty shop (1.5%). The reasons they had quit these first jobs were: 3 (4.6%) had received low salaries, 5 (7.7%) had not liked it, 2 (3.1%), had thought the job was boring, 2 (3.1%) said it was too far away, 1 (1.5%), had thought it was a disgusting working environment and 3 (4.5%) had become garment factory workers. They all said that garment manufacturing was a better option for them.

What was life for women with this profile six years after?

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[3]Part of the sisal zone belong to the Merida *Municipio* (county). The city of Merida also belongs to this *Municipio*, but they should not be confused because they are not equivalent.

[4]A place were the *henequén's* fiber is industrialized.

Home-based Working Daughters in 1991-92

Worker's household composition

Of the original sample of 7 home-based working daughters, 5 were re-interviewed during the second field work. Only one was married, yet none of them was still involved with home-based clothes manufacturing. The 4 single women were living with their family of origin and only one of these 4 co-residents groups had switched to be woman head.

Two of these single women felt "*quedadas,*" that is, they were frustrated because they were not married yet and because at their age they thought they never will (these women wee middle-aged: 32 and 35 in 1991-92). The other two single women were two young sisters (22 and 23) building a carrier for themselves. They wanted to marry but were waiting for "the proper man". Their father had deserted the family a few years ago and they were well aware of the importance for women "to be able to cope economically with a family by their own" (*es importante que la mujer pueda mantener una familia).*

Table No. 28 describes key variables to understand these women's situation in the two periods researched. The above mentioned Table highlights that closely related to changes in their position in the household, women switched or not main occupations. The 4 single women classified again as home-based daughters were carrying out activities outside their homes, mainly for their own training, while the one that was married had become a full-time housewife.

TABLE No. 28.
KEY VARIABLES FOR HOME-BASED WORKING DAUGHTERS IN 1985-86, RE-INTERVIEWED IN 1991-92

NUM	YEAR	AGE	WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE HH	WOMEN'S OCCUPATION	DOM GROUP	FAM UNIT
WOMEN STILL WORKING AT THE GARMENT INDUSTRY IN 1991-92: NONE						
WOMEN ENGAGED IN AN OUTSIDE ACTIVITY IN 1991-92:						
2	1985	26	DAUGHTER	HOME-BASED LABOR	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	32	DAUGHTER	EMBROIDERING TEACHER	1 CFU	CFU
3A	1985	16	DAUGHTER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	22	DAUGHTER	EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT	1 WH	WH
3B	1985	17	DAUGHTER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1986	22	DAUGHTER	STUDYING A ACCOUNTING	1 WH	WH
151	1985	29	DAUGHTER	HOME-BASED	2 CFU	CFU
	1991	35	DAUGHTER	STUDYING TO BECOME A SEAMSTRESS	2 CFU	CFU
WOMEN WHO HAD BECOME FULL-TIME HOUSEWIVES IN 1991-1992						
1	1985	18	DAUGHTER	HOME-BASED	3 CFU+ 1 WH	CFU
	1991	24	WIFE AND MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU	CFU

CFU = COMPLETE FAMILY UNIT
WH = WOMEN HEADED FAMILY UNIT

By the second interview, one of the former workers was not working for a wage because she was a full-time student working towards a BA in accounting at the

Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán. Her sister had finished studying for a technical carrier (executive assistant) and was working as such. These two sisters' mother, when abandoned, had started preparing and selling regional food (*panuchos, salbutes, codzitos)* and was successful with her tiny business. Besides, the working women in this domestic group contributed to the household budget and the five women pooled efforts to "sell well" (*para tener una buena venta*), specially on week ends.

Hence, personal experiences are symbolized and become part of women's identity. For these women an absent father and a hard-working mother were crucial in their personal expectations of looking carefully to whom they will marry and assure that, if necessary, economically they would be able to maintain themselves and their children without constraints.

In 1985-86 among the 4 households of these 5 home-based workers, 3 fathers and 1 mother had been the main economic providers. In all four cases the mothers had handled the budget. All domiciliary workers had declared that they gave all their salaries to the household, keeping only a minimum for their personal expenses. It is important to point out that daughters tended not to know how the economy of their co-resident groups was managed. The average household members was of 11.25, with 4.25 economic contributors and 5.00 dependents, there were 1.17 dependents for each contributor. The per capita household budget represented 0.6% of the general minimum legal per capita salary then.[5]

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[5]As pointed out before, the household budget was calculated adding up the contributions given by all household members. Because the household economic information was gathered over four different years (1985, '86, '91 and '92), the household budget was divided by the number of its members to get a *per capita* figure. For comparison, the minimum legal wage was divided by five (the mean

By 1991-92 a husband, three fathers and a mother were the main economic contributors and three workers and a mother were in charge of organizing the expenses. One ex-home-based worker was giving between 51 and 60% of her salary to the household and 2 were still contributing with almost all their earnings. The number of household members was in average 5.7 with 2 economic contributors and 3.75 economic dependents, which gave a dependency ratio of 1.87. However, the per capita minimum legal wage had raised to 1.10% of the per capita general minimum wage (Table No. 24).

Thus, even if single women wanted to get married and have children, they were building a career for themselves. Besides, they all had left home-based labor seeking for better opportunities for them. The case of the married woman clearly illustrates that one of the most difficult periods for women is that when they have very young children. To better understand the challenges they face and how they overcome them, one case study is described:

Case Study

In 1985, Mauricia was an 18-year-old single woman who embroidered clothes for a middleman as a home-based worker. She lived with her mother, her six brothers and two sisters, two sisters-in-law, a brother-in-law, three nephews and two nieces.

Her father had another family and was not living with them when the interview took place, nor did he contribute to household expenses. Her parents had married 48 years before when he was 16 and she 14; both were from the countryside.

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household members used by the government to calculate the *per capita* legal minimum wage). At last, the *per capita* household budget was divided by the *per capita* legal minimum wage.

Their house was built of concrete in a large field where chickens and pigs were raised; it also had fruit trees. They had a small grocery store that was kept by almost the whole family. Her mother was responsible for the domestic chores, for cleaning the patio[6] and caring for the animals although she got help from her sons, sons-in-law, daughters and daughters-in-law.

They had a refrigerator that was also used for the business (they sold ice and cold sodas for profit). Food was paid for with the contributions of the family members who earned a wage. Usually Mauricia's mother cooked for everybody and managed the general household expenses. They pooled their money to pay the electric bill, buy gas for the stove, etc.

Each family unit had paid for clothes, school supplies and entertainment for the members of each unit, and the "wife" of each family unit washed (by hand since they did not have a washing machine) and ironed the clothes and took care of her own kids (feeding them and bathing them). Mauricia and her sisters washed and ironed their own clothes, but their mother did this task for her single sons. The house cleaning and the dishes were done by the adult female members of the household by turns. Her mother was not included in these tasks since "with the cooking she did enough" (*con la cocina tiene bastante*).

When interviewed, Mauricia had been working in the garment industry for two years. She was 12 when one of her sisters taught her to sew. Her sister was a home-based worker and Mauricia asked the same middleman for a job. She liked working at home because "(she) could help (her) mother, be with (her) family, and

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[6]The unwanted plants from the front and backyards should be uprooted periodically (*deshierbar*). This is mainly a male task.

worked hard only when (she) wanted or needed more money" (*me gusta estar en casa porque puedo ayudar a mi mamá y estar con mi familia y tengo que trabajar duro sólo cuando necesito dinero para algo).* She worked around 6 hours daily. She was paid by the piece and lacked fringe benefits. Her average monthly earnings were $ 8 000.00, around 24% of the minimum legal wage. She also sang for weddings and parties and she sometimes got paid, although she did it more for fun.

In 1991 Mauricia married Wilson, a loader. For the kind of job he had, sometimes he got money and sometimes he did not and he lacked fringe benefits; thus, they were extremely poor. They had two children, a boy (a year-and-a- half-old) and a girl (five-months-old). After being a home-based worker for two years, Mauricia worked in various garment factories in search for better wages. When she was single, she even combined home-based labor with the factory work for a while. She worked for *Diseños Logar* a year and a half; she moved to *Fragatta* and worked 6 months from 3 in the afternoon to 10 at night, then she switched to Hawaiian Tropics and stayed there for a year, but she never got medical care so she moved out. Finally, after getting married she worked at *Castro Rivero* for two years, the year she was pregnant and the first one with her baby.

However, despite their desperate economic situation and the fact that she felt skilled in sewing, she quit her job because, although her mother-in-law looked after her baby while she was at the factory, he started getting sick a lot. Finally, when they had to take him to the hospital with a strong case of diarrhea they decided that she should stay at home to take care of him.

During the second interview Mauricia was living in a house that one of her sisters had bought; she did not pay rent. It was located a few blocks from her former

house and this house had a single room without a concrete floor; her furniture consisted of a table, two chairs, a small stove, a playpen for the children and two hammocks. It was hard for her to live in these conditions; her children could not be put on the floor because first they got dirty and then sick. Thus, she had to carry them, leave them in the playpen or in the hammocks.

Mauricia and her husband got regular help from their families. One of her brothers sent them groceries; her mother-in-law looked after the children when necessary and sometimes she also gave them money, bought toys and clothes for her grandchildren or sent them prepared food. Mauricia liked sewing very much; when she finished assembling a garment she enjoyed contemplating its perfection knowing she had made it. She would have liked, at least, to have continued being a home-based worker but she lacked a sewing machine and too many economic constraints to even think about buying one. Besides, with their home conditions she had to look after her children full-time; her spare time was limited to the moments when they were sleeping.

She said she was "desperate" to see her children grow up so she could look for a job again; she especially wanted to be in the position to give her children "a better life." She was well aware that "with my husband's earning we are not going to get ahead" (*con lo que gana mi esposo no vamos a salir adelante*). She said that it was very difficult for a married woman and a mother to work outside the home "because first she has to take care of her house and her family, and then leave the house" *(para la mujer trabajar es dificil, para salir de su casa primero tiene que atender su casa y su familia).* Nevertheless, she was anxious to work for a salary again because "our misery despairs me" *(nuestra miseria me desespera*).

Mauricia's case illustrates that many time women dropping out from the labor force after marriage and/or child birth is not a personal choice or a husband's imposition. The problematic situations with difficult solutions they faced are the ones that often pushed them out of paid work. Furthermore, the poorer they are, the most vulnerable they are too, and their chances to remain in the work force outside their homes are less.

For example, the lack of a refrigerator, a bathroom and a paved floor at the house make the children sick more often. They also made it harder for their mothers to take care of them. Nonetheless, the social construction of gender also plays a role in shaping these women lives. For instance, Mauricia as factory worker would have had a relative high fixed wage and fringe benefits; her husband as loader earned much less, his wage was not fixed and lacked fringe benefits. However, they did not even think about her remaining at the garment factory and him staying at home, despite the fact that she reported him as "a warm father that often plays with and takes care of his kids while I am doing a household chore" *(es cariñoso con los niños, juega con ellos y los cuida mientras yo arreglo cosas de la casa).* Yet, Mauricia pictured herself as potential worker and her husband agreed that she should return to the labor force as soon as possible.

TABLE No. 29.
KEY VARIABLES FOR FACTORY WORKING
DAUGHTERS INTERVIEWED IN 1985-86 AND 1991-92.

NUM	YEAR	AGE	WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE HH	WOMEN'S OCCUPATION	DOM GROUP	FAM UNIT
WOMEN STILL WORKING AT THE GARMENT INDUSTRY IN 1991-92:						
162	1985	17	DAUGHTER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	23	DAUGHTER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
170 B	1985	17	DAUGHTER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	23	DAUGHTER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
168	1985	20	DAUGHTER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	26	WIFE & MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
WOMEN ENGAGED IN AN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY INSIDE THEIR HOMES:						
157	1985	20	DAUGHTER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	26	DAUGHTER	NON-WAGED FAMILY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
154	1986	17	DAUGHTER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU+ 1 WH	CFU CFU
	1991	23	WIFE & MOTHER	PETTY SELLER	1 CFU	
160	1985	18	DAUGHTER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	24	WIFE & MOTHER	SEAMSTRESS	1 CFU	CFU
166	1985	16	DAUGHTER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	22	WIFE & MOTHER	SEAMSTRESS	1 CFU	CFU

TABLE No. 29 (CONTINUED...)

NUM	YEAR	AGE	WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE HH	WOMEN'S OCCUPATION	DOM GROUP	FAM UNIT
WOMEN WHO WERE OUT OF THE LABOR FORCE IN 1991-92:						
167	1985	17	DAUGHTER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	23	DAUGHTER	UNEMPLOYED	2 CFU	CFU
152	1985	18	DAUGHTER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	24	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU	CFU
155	1985	17	DAUGHTER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	23	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU	CFU
NUM	YEAR	AGE	WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE HH	WOMEN'S OCCUPATION	DOM GROUP	FAM UNIT
156	1985	36	DAUGHTER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	42	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU	CFU
158	1985	26	DAUGHTER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	32	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU 1 WH	CFU
159	1985	16	DAUGHTER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	22	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU+ R	CFU
161	1985	19	DAUGHTER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	25	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU	CFU

TABLE No. 29 (CONTINUED...)

NUM	YEAR	AGE	WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE HH	WOMEN'S OCCUPATION	DOM. GROUP	FAM. UNIT
163	1985	23	DAUGHTER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	29	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU	CFU
164	1985	27	DAUGHTER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	33	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU+ R	CFU
165	1985	20	DAUGHTER	FACTORY WORKER	3 CFU	CFU
	1991	26	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU	CFU
169	1985	27	DAUGHTER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	33	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU+ R	CFU
170 A	1985	15	DAUGHTER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	22	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU	CFU

CFU = COMPLETE FAMILY UNIT
WH = WOMEN HEADED FAMILY UNIT
+R = PLUS RELATIVES

Factory Working Daughters in 1991-92

Major changes on women's lives

From the group of factory garment workers, 19 of 65 were re-interviewed in 1991-92. Of the these women 4 (21.0%) were still daughters and 15 (79.0%) were

married and had children. Table No. 29 summarizes key information for these women.

From the 4 daughters, 2 were still garment factory workers, 1 was working as non-waged family worker helping their parents with a grocery store they had at home and the other referred to herself as "unemployed" (although she did not emphasized being searching for a job) (Table No. 29).

From the 15 ex-daughters that had married and had children 1 was still working in the garment industry as a factory worker; 3 were engaged in paid work at home (two were seamstresses and one a petty seller) and 11 had become full-time housewives.

This panorama indicates that these women worked outside their homes when single but left the labor force when they got married or, at the latest, when their first child was born. After abandoning paid labor, they were full-time mothers and wives in charge of domestic chores. I intend to trace their future behavior by following them up again in a couple of years. This new follow up will highlight if they get again into the labor force when their children reach school age.

Table No. 30 synthesizes when women abandoned the garment labor force. From the interviews it can be said that, in strict sense, only the 4 women who left their paid employment when they got married and the 2 that had left their jobs before getting married because they were "bored" were convinced that "a women's place is in their homes because nobody takes care of children better than their own mothers" (*el lugar de la mujer está su casa porque nadie atiende a los niños mejor que su propia madre)* and "I like to be at home, if I were working I would be worrying about my children constantly" (*me gusta estar en mi casa, si trabajara estaría preocupada*

TABLE No. 30. WHEN FORMER WORKING DAUGHTERS LEFT THE APPAREL LABOR FORCE.	
BEFORE GETTING MARRIED (1 SELLS "FüLLER")	2
ON GETTING MARRIED (1 SOMETIMES EMBROIDERS FOR FRIENDS)	4
WHEN HER FIRST CHILD WAS BORN (1 IS A SEAMSTRESS)	4
WHEN HER SECOND CHILD WAS BORN	2
CONTINUED WORKING MARRIED AND WITH CHILDREN, BUT COULD NOT CONTINUE WORKING (1 IS A SEAMSTRESS)	2
STILL WORKS AS A FACTORY GARMENT WORKER	1

todo el día por mis hijos). However, they agreed that "if (economically) necessary" *(si es [económicamente] necesario)* women should look for a paid job, but only "if they can guarantee that their children will be well cared" (*si pueden asegurar que sus hijos estarán bien atendidos).*

One of the housewives under specific request sometimes embroidered cross stitch at home. She did the task to avoid getting bored and as a source of pride with relatives and friends. She did not have children and "(her) household expenses (were) easily covered by (her) husband's earnings" (*a mí me alcanza perfectamente con lo que gana mi marido).* For the other 7 married women, the interviews made clear that even though they apparently followed the "traditional" pattern of dropping out the labor force after marriage, they abandoned the labor market forced upon them by circumstances: They stayed in their jobs as long as they could, but especially when their first child was born, they faced enormous difficulties finding proper care.

Even when mothers and mothers-in-law offered to look after their grandchildren, the workers had to leave the garment labor force.

However, this group of former working women had the firm idea to return into the labor market as soon as possible. They were well aware that their husbands' earnings would never be enough to give them and their children "a proper life" (*con lo que gana mi marido no podremos tener una vida apropiada).* On the other hand, their previous working experiences gave them the feeling that they were capable of providing for the difference and "had a better life" *(si yo entro a trabajar tendremos una vida mejor).*

Contradictorily, the only woman who could continue working in a garment factory after getting married and having children was willing to become a housewife as soon as she could. She was living in a multiple family unit household with her husband and children, sharing the house with her father, mother, brothers and sisters. Her mother was in charge of all domestic chores, she was only in charge of washing "my clothes" (hers, her husband's and her children's) which she cleaned on weekends. She was still in the labor force because her own house was being built and her income was necessary. However, she was willing to stop working for a wage as soon the house was finished because she said, "I am tired of working all day long and I am aware that I have not taken proper care of my boy" (*ya estoy cansada de trabajar todo el día y descuidar a mi hijo).*

Household Dynamics

By far, in 1985-86 nuclear arrangements predominated in the co-resident groups with daughters living with their families of origin. In 1991-92 nuclear

arrangements also predominated but many of the married workers were living with their families of procreation.

In 1985-86, 12 (66.6%) fathers and 6 (33.3%) brothers were the main households' economic providers; in these 18 households the mother handled the household budget (1 case was missing). Workers differed in their contributions to their co-resident groups. One worker gave between 21 and 30% of her income to the household; 4 (22.2%) between 31 and 40%; 1 (5.6%) between 41 and 50% and 12 (66.7%) reported giving all their income, keeping the minimum for themselves for transportation and other personal expenses.

In 1985-86 these women's households had a mean of 5 members (Table No. 24), 2.8 economic contributors and 1.6 economic dependents. The dependency ratio was low (.57) and economically they were in average the group with the best conditions with 3.7 per capita minimum legal wages. This situation was due to household composition, workers living with other working brothers and sisters.

By 1991-92, the main economic contributors were: 14 (73.7%) husbands, 4 fathers (21.0%) and a brother (5.3%). The household budget was managed by 10 (52.7%) of the interviewed women; 2 (10.5%) husbands; 2 couples (10.5%) (women and her husband); 4 mothers (21.0%) and a case in which the worker and her mother (5.3%) handled it jointly.

Hence, men were the household's main economic providers and women the ones that predominantly handled the budget. Although in a few cases other patterns were found.

Six of the women originally interviewed were still contributing to household expenses (there was also an un-waged family worker). One (16.7%) was giving

between 31 and 40% of her income; 1 (16.7%) between 41 and 50% and 4 (66.7%) were giving all their salaries.

In 1991-92 the mean for household members was 5.33 with 2.27 economic contributors and 1.96 economic dependents. The dependency ratio was low (0.86) and these domestic groups had in average 2.50 *per capita minimum general wages,* which situated them as the second group better off economically, under the former home-based household heads (2.70, Table No. 24). However, these averages should be looked at carefully, 6 married ex-factory workers were living in nuclear domestic groups and their husbands were the sole economic providers.

In summary: The great majority of the former factory working daughters were married and had children in 1991-93 and had dropped-out of the labor force and had become housewives. However, the interviews made clear that their vulnerable circumstances due to their children's ages and not their husbands or their willingness to be at home caring for their children, were what made them leave the labor force.

On the other hand, young men seemed to agree with their wives about the need for them to enter the labor market to guarantee better living standards, especially for educating their children. But the re-interviews made also clear that women's desire to engage again in paid labor was attached to their aspiration to secure a better future for their children. If these women pictured themselves as potential workers, the symbolic meaning of paid work was for them essentially a contribution to their families well-being.

The every-day dynamics of working daughters is illustrated with a case study. This case study is based on two sisters that in 1985-86 were working at the same

factory. By the second interview one of them remained single, the other was married and a younger sister had become part of the garment industry labor force.

Case Study

Gladys and Leidy were 17 and 15-years-old sisters, respectively in 1985. They both were born in the countryside (Sotuta) but had been living in Merida for ten years. Their family had migrated to the city together in search of a better job for the father. The two sisters were single and had finished grade school. Gladys had been working two years for a large factory that manufactured lingerie. When she was 13, she had learned how to sew in the garment industry school (locally known as "*Bomberos*" -firemen- because it is near the Fire Department). There she was offered a job at a local garment factory but she worked there for just a few days because the manager made her sign a blank sheet of paper. Her father went to the factory and asked the man for the paper; he returned it to her father, but fired her.

Later on a friend recommended a sweatshop to her. Gladys stayed there for only six months because the salary was really low. Afterwards, she went to a small legal factory, but because she was only 14 her father was required to sign an official permission form. Finally, she entered the large factory that manufactured lingerie and she had been working there ever since. When Leidy was 14 Gladys recommended her to that factory's manager. Leidy did not have any previous experience sewing, but was taught there. Sewing lingerie in this large factory was Laidy's first working experience.

When Leidy was hired by the factory her father was also required to sign a permission form because she was only 14. She also had to take her birth certificate

and proof that she had finished grade school. However, she was not given medical care immediately; she had to wait 8 months to receive that benefit. Her salary soon was higher than the minimum wage since she was a very good worker.

Gladys was in charge of making button holes and sewing laces; Leidy was an "assembler" using the overlock. The work-day in the factory was from 8:30 in the morning to 1:00 PM and from 2:00 to 6:00 in the afternoon. They were paid a fixed salary, Gladys' being higher than Leidy's ($ 7,500.00 and $ 6,500.00 weekly, respectively). They were legally hired and had fringe benefits.

Gladys and Leidy were living with their father, a driver for a government office, their mother, a full-time housewife, a younger sister and three brothers. The house where the family lived was theirs and was well-constructed, although it was located on ejidal land and on an unpaved street. The house lacked a bathroom, but had electricity and potable water. They did not have a refrigerator, but had a washer. In the backyard they had chickens and fruit trees (guavas, tamarinds, guanabanas, oranges and lemons).

Their mother, a full-time housewife, was in charge of all household chores, although she was helped with house cleaning by Avelina, their younger sister. On weekends Gladys and Leidy washed and ironed their own clothes. They gave only a small amount of money for household expenses, but they paid their personal ones (shoes, clothes, perfumes, etc.).

In 1991 Gladys was 24 and continued working for the same factory; by then she was sharing the workplace with Avelina, her 20-year-old "little" sister. Gladys was planning to stop working on marrying. She identified her father as the household head "because he is economically responsible for meeting the family needs" *(él tiene*

la obligación de mantener a la familia). From her point of view, her main obligation as a daughter was to help her parents economically and with domestic duties. Consequently, she gave part of her salary to her mother, besides washing and ironing her own clothes.

Avelina also recognized her father as the household head; she thought that being a good daughter meant mainly "obeying her parents" *(como hija tengo la obligación de obedecer a mis padres).* Because she was a woman, she needed to collaborate with her mother in household chores: she was responsible for house cleaning, doing the dishes and washing and ironing her own clothes.

Leidy was 21 and had been married for two years to Edesio, a grocer who was earning the minimum legal wage and had fringe benefits because he had been legally hired. They had a daughter, Laura, who was a year and a half old. After marrying Leidy continued working at the garment factory. She was a quick and responsible worker, so she was getting more than the minimum legal wage. They had a savings plan at the factory, so Edesio and Leidy lived with his salary and saved hers. This arrangement gave them the possibility of buying a house in a nearby neighborhood. However, while both were gone to work, the house was broken into twice. This was crucial for their decision to close it down and move a block away from her mother's place.

Along with her father and her two single sisters they pooled money to buy the house where they were living. It was a small house located in a small field. It consisted of a single room divided in two spaces by a wall. The front room was used as a living room during the day and a bedroom at night using hammocks. The one in the back was the kitchen. The house did not have a bathroom or potable water and

its roof was made out of metal sheets. Because the backyard was too small, only a sweet and a sour orange tree had been planted and there were also some chickens.

Leidy liked to live near her mother because she played a very important role in helping her taking care of Laura. She also liked to visit or be visited by her sisters to chat. Because she had worked for several years in the factory, they talked about major changes, work-mates, supervisors, etc.

She thought that her main duties were to educate Laura properly, look after her, guaranteeing that she had everything (*vigilar que no le falte nada)* and care for and obey her husband, although for her "not only obeying him is important, also trying to agree about what is best matters" *(no sólo obedecerlo es importante, también hay que tratar de ponerse de acuerdo para escoger lo mejor entre los dos).*

She said "a woman's place is in her home" *(el lugar de la mujer es su casa).* Nevertheless, she was willing to return to a garment factory when her children reached school age because "times are difficult and a man's earnings are not enough to keep a family" *(nos tocaron tiempos difíciles y el dinero del marido ya no es suficiente para mantener a la familia).* She thought that a woman's incorporation into the labor force had contradictory effects on the family because "on one hand, it is negative since the house and children are not properly taken care of; on the other hand, it is positive because there is more money available to help ends meet" *(por un lado es negativo porque uno descuida su casa y su familia, pero también es positivo porque hay más dinero para vivir como uno quiere).*

Her "ideal" family would be one in which the man's earnings were sufficient to cover all the household expenses and the women could stay at home without economic constraints. She identified herself as full-time housewife not engaged in

any economic activity, but while the conversation was taking place, various neighbors purchased oranges, eggs and piece of ice she had made in plastic bags.

In synthesis: Because of the intra-household division of power by gender and generation "daughters" were the most subordinated group within the household. This led to their strong desire to get married. Married women felt that the domestic space was theirs and made decisions within it. By contrast the single daughters in their thirties still had to ask for "permission," for instance, to go out. Thus, along the desire of having children, women felt that marriage empowered them.

Young women portrayed themselves as potential workers. But for them the need to reach the labor force was strongly attached to their families' well-being. Even for the two young women that were clearly building a career for themselves their main concern was giving their children a life with less economic constraints. For these women the symbolic meaning of paid work was essentially a contribution to the family well-being (Abreu and Sorj, 1990). The main role of young couple's close kin to help them out was a very important strategy for survival.

Working Sisters

There were only two factory workers classified as sisters. The first one (No. 234) was Rubí, a 17-year-old single woman living with José, her brother (15), Ruth and Elizabeth, her two younger sisters (13 and 11, respectively) and Rosario, her grandmother. Rosario did not work for a wage but was in charge of all household domestic chores. José and Ruth had finished grade school but had not continued studying. But since Ruth was too young to get into the labor force, she stayed at

home helping her grandmother with household chores. Elizabeth was attending middle school.

This rare arrangement started when Rubí's parents separated several years before. However, at that time the four children continued living with their mother. But when their mother re-married, they did not want to live with her new husband, so they decided to move in with their grandmother (their mother's mother).

When interviewed in 1986 Rubí had been working for four months in a small factory. Rubí was the household's main economic provider[7] earning $ 45,000.00 a month and giving most of her salary for household maintenance. She kept a minimum amount for her personal expenses. José also worked for a wage at a car painting shop and received $ 32,000.00 monthly. However, he gave only half of his salary to the household budget.

Rubí was an "assembler" using an industrial machine to do her work. Her mother had taught her to sew at home, but she recognized that she was not prepared to work at a factory, so she accepted that she got skilled training at the enterprise.

The other working sister was Virginia (No. 135) a 38-year-old woman from the countryside (Ticul) who had been living in Merida for 20 years, 18 of which she had worked as a maid. She had quit that job two years before the interview to look after her younger brother. He was studying for a BA in industrial chemistry and already working at a factory as a chemist. Virginia's younger sister was also living with them and studying at the Normal Superior to become a middle-school teacher.

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[7]Because of this she could have been classified as household head, but since she lived in a rare domestic arrangement with no co-resident parents, she was categorized as sister instead.

The two younger siblings were on their own and busy studying. Thus, they felt they needed help with household chores. Their mother could not "take care" of them *(no puede atenderlos)* because she had a husband and children in Ticul. Then they decided that Virginia could quit her job as maid and take care of her siblings.

However, "because my brother and my sister are adults they did not mess up the house that much, so I had a lot of time left and got bored" Virginia started working at a garment factory, also "to have my own money. I don't like asking for my personal expenses." She first took a sewing course at the IMSS in her spare time and the teacher, who had her own small clandestine sweatshop (about 10 workers), offered her a position. The shop looked like a "regular" house, the only difference was an advertisement in the door announcing "guayaberas and clothes are made here" *(se hacen guayaberas y ropa en general).*

There she assembled whole pieces (shorts, skirts, men's shirts, etc.). The workday was from 9 in the morning to 6 in the afternoon with a 45 minute break for lunch at noon. She was paid by the piece and worked only four days a week. The week before the interview she had made $ 2,800.00; she had an average monthly salary of $ 15,200.00. Fridays, the day Virginia did not go to the shop, she cleaned the house and washed and ironed the family's clothes. If she was not finished, she would continue doing household chores Saturday and Sunday.

Virginia did the cooking at night after returning from the sweatshop. She bought groceries and other necessary items in her way back from work. The money for the household expenses was provided by her brother; her own earnings were for herself *(para mis gustos)* and to "help" her parents.

Neither of the two sisters were found in 1991-92. They had both moved and their neighbors did not know their new addresses. However, Virginia's neighbors said that her brother had a good job and had bought a house in a new development, where they all had moved to.

The importance of "the family" (and "the family" can be understood as the components of the nuclear family) for Mexicans is exemplified with the few cases of garment workers not living either with their parents or their husbands and children (family of origin and procreation, respectively).

Rubi's grandmother was angry at her daughter because she got married "knowing perfectly well" *(sabía perfectamente)* that her children did not like her new husband. It was impossible for her to understand "how she could have abandon them for a man" *(no entiendo como pudo dejarlos por ese hombre).*

Virginia felt "quedada" (frustrated for not had been able to marry and sure that she would never will). She thought her brother and her sister were going to get married soon and she was thinking about returning to Ticul: "my parents are old and they will need help soon" *(mis padres están grandes y yo puedo ayudarles).*

Unfortunately neither of the two "sisters" could be interviewed again. They both had moved and their neighbors had no idea where they were.

CHAPTER 7
WORKING WIVES

General Information

The second group to be analyzed is that of wives. Wives were either young childless women or middle-aged women with no co-resident offspring. During the first interviews, the number of workers assigned as wives was equal in both groups. Only six in each. These frequencies represented 3.9% of the 153 home-based and 3.4% of the 178 factory laborers.

The lack of participation of wives in the apparel manufacturing labor force corroborated that in Yucatan the social division of labor by gender was still strong. If married, women preferred staying home as housewives and mothers. They reached the work force only if necessary for family expenses, and wives were seldom in a severe economic constraints. Their husband's earnings usually were enough to pay for the couple's needs. This was especially true because wives very often lived in extended households. Thus, few wives saw the need to seek paid employment.

Using the methodology for analyzing household composition outlined in Chapter No. 5 there were 8 family units in the home-based workers wives' domestic groups and 9 in the factory laborers'. No female heads of family units were found and only one of the 12 workers was living with her husband in a separate house. Table No. 31 summarizes the information about household composition of these workers.

TABLE No. 31.
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF FAMILY UNITS.
(WIVES).

FAMILY UNITS	HOME-BASED		FACTORY	
SINGLE FAMILY UNITS	n	%	n	n
NUCLEAR NUCLEAR PLUS RELATIVES	1 3	16.7 50.0	3	50.0
TWO FAMILY UNITS				
COMPLETE	2	33.3	3	50.0
TOTAL	6	100.0	6	100.0

Being at home, wives working as home-based laborers were often in charge of domestic chores and participated in them in high rates. But because they lived predominantly in extended households with other women around, doing the dishes and buying groceries was a task shared frequently. Nonetheless, factory workers tended to get more "help" with housework (Table No. 20). Chores were distributed basically between their mothers, sisters and sisters-in-law.

Three of the 6 outworkers originally interviewed (50%) were involved in home-based labor because of their responsibilities with their homes and their husbands. One (16.7%) preferred working at her home because of the lack of pressure, one (16.7%) because "it is comfortable" and the other (16.7%) stated that when she looked for a job, the factory hired her as a home-based laborer.

TABLES No. 32. FACTORY BY TYPE OF WORKERS. WIVES.			
SIZE OF THE FACTORY	HOME-BASED	FACTORY	ROW TOTAL
NO DATA	1 100.0 16.7		1 8.3
LARGE		1 100.0 16.7	1 8,3
MEDIUM-SIZED	2 50.0 33.3	2 50.0 16.7	4 33.3
SMALL	1 25.0 16.7	3 75.0 50.0	4 33.
SWEATSHOP	1 100.0 16.7		1 8,3
JOBBER	1 100.0 16.7		1 8,3
COLUMN TOTAL	6 50.0	6 50.0	12 100.0

Half of the factory workers (3, 50.0%) had decided to work outside their homes because they lacked their own sewing machines. A third (2, 33.3%) gave as reasons the better pay and fringe benefits outside the home and one (16.6%) said she was going to a factory because it was near her home.

As Table No. 32 shows, home-based wives worked for medium and small plants and a sweatshop. Only one was working for a middle men. This demonstrates that among outworkers the possibility of going to the work place to pick up and return the

tasks done made them less vulnerable than wives and mothers of young children usually confined to their homes because of household chores and child rearing responsibilities. These latter women were mainly hired by intermediaries who, as has been discussed, pay the worst salaries in the industry. None of the factory wives were working for large firms, nor for sweatshops.

Not a single home-based working wife was involved in another economic activity and only one (16.7%) of the factory laborers embroidered, knitted or handcrafted hammocks to earn extra money. This also demonstrates that women in this position within their households were less vulnerable economically or did not feel the need for extra money. In fact, they were working for a salary mostly because they were living in extended households and wanted to save and be able to buy their own places.

Socio-demographic Characteristics of Working Wives

Wives were young; the mean age for home-based workers was 31.5 years old (S.D. 14.7) and for factory workers 25.0 (S.D. 6.2). The difference between the mean ages of both groups was not significant at the .05 level. Among the outworkers were 3 (50.0%) women who did not finish grade school, 2 (33.3%) who had finished elementary school and one (16.7%) who had graduated from middle school. Factory workers were more educated, 4 (66.7%) had finished grade school and 2 (33.3%) had attended junior high, but dropped out before graduating.

Four (66.7%) home-based workers were born in Merida and 2 (33.3%) out of state. Also 4 (66.7%) factory workers were from Yucatan's capital city and 2 (33.3%) from the countryside. Migrations were again present, even in a sample as small as this one.

TABLE No. 32.
FACTORY BY TYPE OF WORKER. WIVES.

SIZE OF FACTORY	HOME-BASED	FACTORY	ROW TOTAL
NO DATA	1 100.0 16.7		1 8.3
LARGE		1 100.0 16.7	1 8.3
MEDIUM-SIZED	2 50.0 33.3	2 50.0 33.3	4 33.3
SMALL	1 25.0 16.7	3 75.0 50.0	4 33.3
SWEATSHOP	1 100.0 16.7		1 8.3
JOBBER	1 100.0 16.7		1 8.3
COLUMN TOTAL	6 100.0	6 50.0	12 100.0

For 4 (66.7%) home-based workers the apparel industry was their first job. There was another woman (6.7%) whose first economic activity had been washing and ironing clothes and one (6.7%) had been working in a *cordelería*. However, only one (16.7%) of the four outworkers was still sewing for the same firm, 3 (50%) had switched factories seeking better pay and another (16.7%) because she had moved. The *cordelera* had stopped working for a while to study and the woman who washed and ironed stopped because "she did not like it."

Among the factory workers, 4 (66.7%) got into the economically active population for the first time as garment laborers, one as a seamstress and the other as an employee in the service sector. Three garment workers were still in the same plant and the other had changed plants looking for better pay. The seamstress had changed activity because she got into a garment factory and the service sector employee left the labor force for a while after getting married.

These data emphasize the few and low paid opportunities for women with this profile in the local labor market. What was their situation six years after?

Working Wives Six Years After

Home-based workers

From the original sample of 6 home-based workers classified as wives, 5 were interviewed again in 1991-92. The important information of these women is summarized in Table No. 33. The 3 young women had had children, becoming wives and mothers. The 2 middle-aged women had no co-resident offspring. Only one of the young wives and mothers was still in the labor force; she had become a factory garment worker to increase her income. In both interviews this woman was living with her family of origin, so her mother cared for her son while she was out working.

The middle-aged woman who had kept working as an outworker in apparel manufacturing had a married daughter living in Cancun. Because both spouses wanted to work there and save some money, the worker's grandchildren were living with her. By the second interview her daughter and her son-in-law had moved back to

TABLE No. 33.
KEY VARIABLES FOR HOME-BASED WORKING WIVES INTERVIEWED IN 1985-86 AND 1991-92.

NUM	YEAR	AGE	WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE HH	WOMEN'S OCCUPATION	DOM GROUP	FAM UNIT
WOMEN STILL WORKING AT THE GARMENT INDUSTRY IN 1991-92						
5	1985	43	WIFE	HOME-BASED	1 CFU+ R	CFU
	1991	49	WIFE	HOME-BASED	2 CFU	CFU
9	1985	19	WIFE	HOME-BASED	2 CFU	CFU
	1991	25	WIFE & MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	3 CFU+ R	CFU
WOMEN WHO HAD BECOME FULL-TIME HOUSEWIVES IN 1991-1992:						
6	1985	23	WIFE	HOME-BASED	1 CFU+ R	CFU
	1991	29	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU	CFU
7	1985	46	WIFE	HOME-BASED	1 CFU+ R	CFU
	1991	52	WIFE	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU+ R	CFU
8	1985	21	WIFE	HOME-BASED	2 CFU	CFU
	1991	27	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	2 CFU	CFU

CFU = COMPLETE FAMILY UNIT
WH = WOMEN HEADED FAMILY UNIT
MH = MALE HEADED
+R = PLUS RELATIVE

Merida and were sharing the house with her. She said that she had continued working for a wage because she was used to having her own money.

Of these households, four husbands and a father were the household main economic providers in 1985-86. Three workers (60.0%), a husband (20.0%) and a

mother (20.0%) handled the household budget. The five women interviewed, said they gave all their earnings to the co-resident group. The mean for household members was 5.4 with 3.0 economic contributors and 2.4 economic dependents. The dependency ratio was 0.8 and the *per capita* minimum legal wage 1.4. (Table No. 24).

By 1991-92 the main economic providers were three husbands and a brother. Three interviewed women and a mother were handling the domestic allowances. Of the two women who were still working for a wage, one gave all her money for household expenses (the home-based worker) and the other saved it all to buy a house (the factory employee). Her family unit expenses were paid with her husband's earnings. These households had an average of 6.8 members, 2.8 economic contributors and 4.0 economic dependents. The dependency ratio was 1.42 and their *per capita* minimum legal wage 1.8 (Table No. 24). Hence, economically, these domestic groups had not impoverished, despite women dropping-out the labor force.

To grasp the details of women's everyday lives a case study is presented. Afterwards the situation of the wives working at factory in 1985-86 will be presented which will also include a case study and at the end of the Chapter some conclusions based on these women's life changes will be drawn.

Case Study

Rosalba was a 23-year-old woman who was born in Merida. At 17 she married Esteban, who had also been born in Merida and was 18 when they married. Since they were going steady, he had been a driver working for diverse firms. When the interview took place, he was driving a bus for a local transportation company

(*Alianza de Camioneros de Yucatán*) with the minimum legal salary and the fringe benefits required by law.

The couple lived with Martha, Rosalba's sister-in-law. Rosalba was educated; she had finished middle school and had studied to be a secretary, but she never had worked as such (her husband did not finished grade school; he dropped out in 5th grade). At 17 she got into manufacturing prom rings; then she was a supervisor in a small garment factory, but she quit because her husband did not like her to be out of the house. Her sister, who lived nearby, was tucking for a factory with her own machine at home, thus when the owner of the enterprise gave her another tucking machine, she gave it to Rosalba, teaching her how to use it and converting her into a home-based worker. Rosalba accepted this with joy because her husband was jealous and if she worked at home, he could not protest or get angry.

Their house consisted of three well-built rooms; it lacked a bathroom, refrigerator and washer. It did not have potable water so they had to buy it from a neighbor. It had electricity so a black & white TV, a tape recorder, a fan and the sewing machines could be used.

When interviewed, Rosalba was tucking by piece for a *guayaberas* sweatshop. She was working between 5 and 6 hours a day ("the work is not hard, but it is boring" *el trabajo no es pesado, pero fastidia*) for $ 8 000.00 monthly. She lacked fringe benefits. She did the cooking in the morning every day and washed her clothes and her husband's three times a week also in the morning, ironing it that same night. Her sister-in- law did the dishes and bought the groceries; they both cleaned the house.

By 1991 her sister-in-law had married and had moved away. Her husband was still in the same job, and they had had two children, a boy (age 4) and a girl (2).

She had stopped working as a home-based tucker when the machine was appropriated by the owner; then she became a full-time housewife. Because of economic constraints she wanted to work again as a domiciliary assembler or tucker, but she lacked a sewing machine and she was not sure that her husband would agree.

Because she was poor, her family sometimes gave her milk or chocolate for the children; her single sisters also bought them clothes and shoes. She was in charge of all domestic chores. Rosalba thought that women have the same rights as men to work and have their own money; however she said "no one can take care of children better than their own mother" (*nadie como la madre para cuidar a los hijos*) so when they are small and demanding women have to "put them in first place" (*atender a los hijos debe ser lo más importante*).

As there were in all only 9 wives re-interviewed, the situation of factory workers will be presented and then the general conclusion derived from the overall group will be outlined.

Factory Workers

Only 4 of the 6 factory wives originally in the sample were contacted again in 1991-92. A young woman had a five-year-old boy and a 2 year-old-girl, a middle-aged women married when it was too late to have children and the other 2 women could not have children. They all were still part of the economically active population. Three women continued working as garment laborers (the one with children was helped by her mother while she was at the factory), the other owned of a small grocery store. Table No. 34 summarizes important information about them.

TABLE No. 34.
KEY VARIABLES FOR FACTORY WORKING
WIVES INTERVIEWED IN 1985-86 AND 1991-92.

NUM	YEAR	AGE	WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE HH	WOMEN'S OCCUPATION	DOM GROUP	FAM UNIT
WOMEN STILL WORKING AT THE GARMENT INDUSTRY IN 1991-92						
190	1985	23	WIFE	FACTORY WORKER	2 CFU	CFU
	1991	29	WIFE & MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
191	1985	49	WIFE	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU+ R	CFU
	1991	54	WIFE	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU+ R	CFU
194	1985	27	WIFE	FACTORY WORKER	2 CFU	CFU
	1991	33	WIFE	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
WOMEN ENGAGED IN AN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY INSIDE THEIR HOMES IN 1991-92:						
192	1985	29	WIFE	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU+ 1 WH	CFU
	1991	34	WIFE	PETTY COMMERCE	1 CFU+ R	CFU

CFU = COMPLETE FAMILY UNIT
WH = WOMEN HEADED FAMILY UNIT
MH = MALE HEADED
+R = PLUS RELATIVES

During the fieldwork, the importance for the urban popular sectors of the small grocery stores that were all around the neighborhoods was highlighted. While

interviewing the owner of the small store I observed people buying coffee, cooking oil, dried milk and cookies by pieces or small amounts. For example a can of powered coffee was opened and was sold by "*pesos*" (Mexican currency). The same was true for a whole bottle of cooking oil: small amounts were sold in plastic bags. This was ideal for people that could not afford to go to a supermarket and purchase whole packages. Of course they really paid more for the same products, but since their purchasing power was so low, they could get the products through this mechanism. From the seller's perspective this strategy was also convenient because they got more profits than selling a whole package, albeit very slowly.

During the first interviews none of the workers were living in a nuclear co-resident group; later on there were two women living only with their family of procreation. Once again, the evident importance of "the family" has in Mexico as a means of solidarity and support to cope with periods of constraints was made evident. It was especially important for young couples to have the opportunity to share the house and expenses with their close kin. Yet, there were no statistical differences in household composition between the two periods.

In 1985-86, 3 husbands and a brother-in-law were their household's main economic providers, while two workers, a husband and a sister administered the household budget. All the workers said they kept only a minimum of their salaries for themselves. In average these domestic groups had 5 members, 2.8 economic contributors and 1.6 economic dependents. The dependency ratio was .57 and they had 3.7 *per capita* general legal minimum wages.

By 1991-92 3 husbands and a brother were the main economic providers, in 2 cases the interviewed women handled the collective expenses; in another one the

couple did it together and in the other, the sister. Still, these working women gave all their earnings to their households. Household composition had reduced in size to an average of 3.8 members, 2.0 economic contributors and 1.8 economic dependents. Maybe because the dependency ratio augmented to 0.9, the household *per capita* minimum wage was lower than before: 2.0, but better than their home-based counterparts (Table No. 24). To take a closer look at these women's lives, a case study is presented:

Case Study

Socorro was from the countryside (Tekom), but she had been living in Merida almost all her life. She had finished grade school and had studied to be a seamstress. When first interviewed, Socorro was 49 years old; just a year before she had married a 34-year-old man, Juan, who was a private accountant who had just lost his job. Her husband had never questioned her working in a factory.

Socorro was also living with her sister, Esperanza, who, even though she had worked for a wage previously (preparing drugs at a drug store and as a nurse in a hospital in Yucatan's countryside), she had been economically dependant on the garment worker for five years. They had been together almost all their lives because, until a year before, Socorro had been single and Esperanza had never gotten married. Esperanza was in charge of all household chores while Socorro went to the factory; she even cooked at night so Socorro could take the food to work. Esperanza was also in charge of taking care of the hens; they had to have eggs. They had fruit trees (lemons and sour and sweet oranges) in the backyard. They were and always had

been very close, and no problems had ever arisen because of this work distribution arrangement.

Juan was taken care of by Socorro; she washed and ironed his clothes and prepared his breakfast. However, he ate at his mother's house because, from their point of view, it was not convenient for him to go home when only Esperanza was around "I was the one who married him so Esperanza does not have any obligation to take care of him." Because an already established household dynamic existed when he married Socorro, he had little to say about it. When asked about household decision making, Socorro said "I make all the important decisions" and emphasized "he doesn't decide." Regarding household budgeting, Socorro and Juan (when working) gave Esperanza *el gasto* (weekly money for diverse expenses). From that money she bought groceries and paid for household needs such as electricity and the gas for the stove. During the interview they were facing economic constraints because of Juan's being unemployed. However, they all hoped he could find another job soon.

Both sisters built the house with their earnings. The field was donated by a brother; it was *ejidal* land. At first it did not have electricity or water (it still did not have water when the interview took place, but the contract with the proper government agency had already been made). The house consisted of a large well-built front room with a smaller one attached at the back that was used as a kitchen. The front room had a roof made of metal sheets. The main house was constructed with the economic efforts of both sisters. The building of the kitchen was financed by

the garment worker; she bought the building materials with a *mutualista*[1], and then saved to pay the construction worker. The house lacked a bathroom, and the water was donated by relatives living next door. They had a refrigerator that both sisters had bought on credit at a local store.

Socorro had been involved in the garment industry since she was fifteen. She had first worked as a home-based worker for five years; her task had been to embroider *hipiles*. Then, at 20 and recommended by a friend, she switched to a factory, the same one she was working at when the interview took place. It was surprising, even to her, to realize that she had been working there continuously for 29 years. It was a small factory with only 6 employees, managed by its male owner. It made sports clothes. Socorro assembled with an industrial sewing machine. The work day was from 8 to 1 in the morning, and from 2 to 6 in the afternoon (from 1 to 2 they had lunch). She got the minimum legal wage and had all legal fringe benefits.

Socorro did not sew as a private seamstress on a regular basis but, if asked, she made shirts and skirts for neighbors and friends. She liked sewing, but she was tired of having done the same thing every day for so many years. She said she had pain in her back and her abdomen, and had lost her formerly good eyesight. Nevertheless, she said:

> I can't complain because I don't know how to do anything else besides sewing . . . and I am lucky. In this factory at least we can stand up when we feel really tired and we have good light and a fan. These conditions are rare in Merida.

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[1]*Mutualista* is a way of saving money which is popular throughout Mexico. For example, ten friends agree to give $ 50 000.00 each for ten months, thus every month one of them can get $ 500 000.00 at one time.

She also liked the working environment because since the factory was so small, all the workers knew each other and had a good relationship with the owner and his family. They all were informed about what was going on in his house, had seen his children grow up and had been invited to the children's christening and other family gatherings.

In 1991 no major changes had occurred in Socorro's life. She still lived with Juan (who by then was working again as an accountant) and Esperanza. She was also still working at the same factory. However, she sincerely said that she would like to stay at home as a housewife, although she liked to have her own money, but "so many years of working make me feel very tired sometimes."

In synthesis: Few wives were in the apparel labor force. This fact emphasized that in Yucatan the social division of labor was strong and women were viewed and viewed themselves primarily as housewives. Their entry into paid work derived primarily from economic constraints. Thus, the symbolic meaning of paid work for them was a need to increase the household budget. The availability of jobs for women with their profile could be reinforcing the above. Working long hours in a low paid and not rewarding job did not look like a better option than staying at home taking care of the house if there are not severe economic constraints.

The interviews to childless women's made clear that for Yucatecan women the desire to have children was very strong. All these women would had liked to be mothers and were frustrated because for one reason or the other they had not been able to. For neither of them not having children was a personal choice.

Again, the strong ties between kin were obvious as well as their support in critical periods. Young couples often lived in extended-households while they worked, little by little, towards obtaining their own infrastructure.

CHAPTER 8
WORKING WIVES AND MOTHERS

General Information

The next group to be analyzed is that of wives and mothers. This Chapter has the same structure than the two precedent ones. First, a socio-demographic profile of wives and mothers in 1985-86 is outlined and then the major changes found in 1991-92 for home-based and factory workers are analyzed and a case study on each group is presented.

In all, there were 192 workers who were classified as wives and mothers: 66% (127) were home-based workers and 33.8% (65) factory employees. Thus, there were 2 wives and mothers working as home-based workers for every factory laborer. Hence, labor segregation by position in the household was also clear in this group of women.

Additionally, 83% of the 153 home-based workers were wives and mothers. This figure reinforces the idea that outworkers are, internationally, wives and mothers. It seemed as if they "preferred" home-based labor rather than working outside their homes. But, in fact their household responsibilities turned out to be an indirect hiring policy that made them "choose" home-based activities to cope with domestic chores. This in itself situated them in low paid activities with no fringe benefits making them a vulnerable sector of the female labor force.

Wives and mothers predominated in home-based labor, but married women with children represented 37% of the women working in plants included in the original

sample. As stated before, they were as important in number as that of daughters, the former "traditional" factory employees. Thus, wives and mothers, unquestionably, were also participating at high rates in the garment factories as regular workers.

TABLE No. 35.
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGES OF FAMILY UNITS
(WIVES AND MOTHERS).

FAMILY UNITS				
SINGLE FAMILY UNIT	n	%	n	%
NUCLEAR	104	83.2	34	
NUCLEAR PLUS RELATIVES	13	10.4	16	
TWO FAMILY UNITS				
COMPLETE	4	3.2	4	6.6
2 COMPLETE PLUS RELATIVES	1	0.8	2	3.3
1 COMPLETE & 1 WOMAN HEADED PLUS RELATIVES			2	3.3
THREE FAMILY UNITS				
COMPLETE	1	0.8	1	1.6
2 COMPLETE & 1 WOMAN HEADED	1	0.8	2	3.3
1 COMPLETE AND 2 WOMEN HEADED	1	0.8		
TOTAL	125	100.0	61	100.0

Eighty three percent of the 125 domestic groups of the home-based wives and mothers were nuclear, while only 55.7% of the factory workers' presented this same feature. By contrast, 16.8% of the home-bases workers were extended, while 44.3% of the factory workers' households presented this characteristic (Table No. 35).

Obviously, all of the worker's family units were "complete" (otherwise they would have been classified as household heads). There were 136 family units in the 125 home-based workers' domestic groups, 4 of them were women headed (2.9%). Among the 75 family units counted in the 61 factory laborers' households also 4 (6.5%) were women headed. The extended households in both group were predominantly due to the presence of the worker's mother and her single sons and daughters (worker's brothers and sisters).

Home-based working wives and mothers were heavily involved with household chores (Table No. 20). But the worker's daughters played an important role in helping out with domestic work. They often did the dishes and cleaned the house. It was clear again that daughters, at the same time they alleviated their mother's burdens, were learning "women's obligations" and were being trained in household-chore performance.

Outworkers were mostly confined within the boundaries of their neighborhoods and 3 husbands used to shop downtown: there were no supermarkets in the popular sectors and supermarkets offered lower prices than those given at local stores. The nearest supermarket (*"San Franciso de Asís"*) was located downtown, and working men went there every day, either to work or as a transfer point to work. However, from the fact that only 3 men did the shopping it cannot be concluded that husbands were not "collaborative" with their wives. In order to buy complete packages in a supermarket a sufficient budget to pay for them is needed. Thus, poor families with little purchasing power did not have this capacity. As stated before, they used to buy the needed products little by little in nearby stores.

TABLE No. 36. REASONS FOR WORKING AT HOME, WIVES AND MOTHERS.		
REASONS	n	%
HOUSEWORK & CHILDREN	107	85.6
HUSBAND WANTS HER HOME	6	4.8
COMPATIBILITY WITH HOUSEWORK	2	1.6
LACK OF PRESSURE	3	2.4
COMPATIBILITY WITH OTHER JOB	1	0.8
CUSTOM	1	0.8
BECAUSE OF AN ACCIDENT	1	0.8
ORIGINALLY EMPLOYED IN THIS WAY	1	0.8
DISLIKE OF FACTORIES	1	0.8
TO DO SOMETHING	1	0.8
NOT FAMILIAR WITH INDUSTRIES	1	0.8
TOTAL	125	100.0

MISSING CASES=2

Regarding the reasons given by women for preferring home-based labor, 85.6% (Table No. 36) mentioned housework and children. There were 4.8% who said they were working at home because their husbands wanted them to; 2.4% preferred it for the advantage of organizing the workday themselves due to a lack of pressure. The above information coincides with the fact that all these women were heavily involved with household chores.

For factory wives and mothers the contribution by daughters and mothers to help them out with household chores was essential. From the tasks that the workers reported were done by these female assistants, it appears that there was a division of labor by generation. Mothers helped out with cooking, and daughters did the dishes and the house cleaning. Three factory garment laborers even paid a maid to have clean the house or do the laundry. This, however, was never true for cooking. Nevertheless, besides their daughters factory workers got help from mothers, mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law and a husband (he did the dishes, cleaned the house and shopped). This made clear the redistribution of housework that had to be done for wives and mothers to work outside their homes.

Table No. 37 summarizes the reasons given by women for working at factories. Sixty one point five percent of the factory workers said they went to a plant because of better payments and/or fringe benefits. These reasons can be added to the 10.7% who said they concentrated better in a factory (concentration speeded up their sewing rates). These figures account for 72.2% of all the factory workers.

Two women (3.1%) openly said they went to a factory just to get away from their homes. From the point of view of Yucatan culture it was very strange to find wives and mothers trying to escape their homes. Although it was not asked, I suspect that either extreme household tension or open domestic violence was present in their homes.

The majority of the home-based workers' children were under age 17 and were in school. Only one outworker's offspring was older than 18. Factory laborers's offspring were also predominantly school age (Table No. 38). Besides, women often referred to their desire for their children to get a better education than the one they

had. Consequently, I suspect that mothers women engaged in wage labor to give their children education.

TABLE No. 37. REASONS FOR PREFERRING A FACTORY, WIVES AND MOTHERS.		
REASONS	n	%
MORE MONEY	28	43.0
FRINGE BENEFITS & BETTER PAYMENT	12	18.5
BETTER CONCENTRATION	7	10.7
LACK OF WON MACHINE	5	7.7
FACTORY LOCATION	3	4.6
COMFORT	2	3.1
TO LEARN MORE	2	3.1
TO GET OUT OF THE HOUSE	2	3.1
NOT EMPLOYED AS A HOME-BASED WORKER	1	1.5
KNOWLEDGE	1	1.5
LACK OF INDUSTRIAL MACHINE	1	1.5
GOT THAT WORK	1	1.5
COLUMN TOTAL	65	99.8

Almost a third of the home-based laborers were working for middle men (Table No. 39) who paid the worst wages but took and picked up the work at the worker's homes. The vulnerability of women who could not get away from their households was again

TABLE No. 38.
OFFSPRING AGES BY TYPE OF WORKER.

AGE GROUP	HOME-BASED	FACTORY	ROW TOTAL
<6	10 34.5 8.0	19 65.5 31.1	29 15.6
6-12	11 64.7 8.8	6 35.3 9.8	17 9.1
13-17	3 37.5 2.4	5 62.5 8.2	8 4.3
>18	1 50.0 .8	1 50.0 1.6	2 1.1
<6 & 6-12	31 79.5 24.8	8 20.5 13.1	39 21.0
<6, 6-12 & 13-17	25 85.0 20.0	3 15.0 4.9	20 10.8
6-12 & 13-17	22 73.3 17.6	8 26.7 13.1	30 16.1
6-12 13-17 & >18	11 84.6 8.8	2 15.4 3.3	13 7.0
<6 & 13-17	3 100.0 2.4		3 1.6
13-17 & >18	2 28.6 1.6	5 71.4 8.2	7 3.8
6-12 & >18	1 33.3 .8	2 66.7 3.3	3 1.6

TABLE No. 38 (CONTINUED...)			
AGE GROUPS	HOME-BASED	FACTORY	ROW TOTAL
<6, 13-17 & >18	2 100.0 1.6		2 1.1
13-17 & >18	3 100.0 2.4		3 1.6
COLUMN TOTAL	125 67.2	61 32.8	186 100.0

MISSING CASES = 6

made evident. Another 25% of the outworkers worked for sweatshops which paid low salaries. Together they represented 56% of the total wives and mothers involved in home-based labor. However, 27 women (21.2%) were working for medium-sized enterprises which offered better salaries.

Factory workers were predominantly (75.7%) laboring for medium and large enterprises, which had better working conditions, 8 (12.1%) were involved with small plants and only 6 (9.1%) were dealing with sweatshops. Thus, wives and mothers had fairly good working conditions if they could select factory labor.

Despite their household responsibilities 21.3% of the 127 wives and mothers working as home-based workers and 29.2% of the 65 factory laborers were involved in another economic activity. Being a private seamstress was the most common additional occupation for both types of workers. The complete list of additional occupations, their frequencies and respective percentages is shown on Table No. 40.

Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Working Wives and Mothers

Home-based laborers were on average 33.7 years old (S.D. 6.2) and factory workers 32.7 (S.D. 7.9) (P=.376). There were 8.4 times more illiterate women within the home-based workers than in the group of factory employees (12.6% vs 1.5%). Aside from this important difference in education, the school level was fairly similar for the two groups. Both types of workers were poorly educated, the majority of them only having attended grade school or less.

Of the home-based group 44 (35.2%) workers were born in Merida, 74 (59.2%) in the countryside and 7 (5.6%) out of state; the equivalent figures for factory laborers were 39 (60.0%) in Merida, 23 (35.4%) in the countryside and 3 (4.6%) out of state. Thus, there were 2 home-based workers from the countryside for each factory worker. The fact that women from the countryside working as outworkers almost doubled the ones in factory work highlights the disadvantages migrants face in the city. They were segregated into the worst jobs in the same economic branch. The lack of close relatives to give them support with child rearing might also play a role in keeping migrants at home.

For 72 outlaborers (56.7%) working in the apparel industry it was their first paid job; 28 (22.0%) had started working as maids; 13 (10.2%) as service sector employees; 4 (3.1%) selling food; 3 (2.4%) at a *tortilla* mill; 2 (1.6%) handcrafting hammocks; 2 (1.6%) as seamstresses; 2 (1.6%) had washed and ironed clothes and 1 (0.8%) had been a teacher. Of all these jobs the piece-worker is the best paid.

Forty-five (69.2%) of the factory workers entered the labor force in the apparel industry, 8 (12.3%) as service sector employees, 6 (9.2%) as maids, 2 (3.1%) as home-based workers in clothing manufacturing, 1 (1.5%) washing and ironing clothes,

1 (1.5%) as a seamstress, 1 (1.5%) at a *tortilla* mill and 1 (1.5%) sewing and selling garments.

TABLE No. 39.
SIZE OF FACTORY BY TYPE OF WORKER.
WIVES AND MOTHERS.

FACTORY SIZE	HOME-BASED	FACTORY	ROW TOTAL
NO DATA	3 75.0 2.4	1 25.0 1.5	4 2.0
LARGE	8 32.0 6.3	17 68.0 26.1	25 13.0
MEDIUM-SIZED	27 45.0 21.2	32 55.0 49.2	60 31.2
SMALL	8 50.0 6.3	8 50.0 12.3	16 8.3
SWEATSHOP	32 84.2 25.2	6 15.8 9.2	38 19.8
JOBBER	38 100.0 30.8		38 19.8
AYUNTAMIENTO	3 100.0 2.3		3 1.5
STORE	6 100.0 2.3		6 3.1
COLUMN TOTAL	127 66.0	65 34.0	192 100.0

TABLE No. 40.
ANOTHER ECONOMIC ACTIVITY BY TYPE OF WORKER.

ACTIVITY	HOME-BASED	FACTORY	ROW TOTAL
SEAMSTRESS	11 52.3 40.7	10 47.6 52.6	21 45.6
WASHES & IRONS CLOTHES	5 100.0 18.5		5 11.0
EMPLOYEE OF THE SERVICE SECTOR	2 100.0 7.4		2 4.3
EMBROIDERS, KNITS	6 50.0 22.2	6 50.0 31.6	12 26.0
OWNS PETTY COMMERCE	2 66.6 7.4	1 33.3 5.3	3 6.5
SEWS *HIPILES ON HER OWN*	1 100.0 3.7		1 2.2
HOME-BASED WORKER		2 100.0 10.5	2 4.3
COLUMN TOTAL	27 99.9	19 100.0	46 99.9

Thus, a large proportion of the wives and mothers had made their labor trajectory entirely in the clothing industry. Besides, 40 (32.0%) home-based workers and 39 (60.9%) factory employees had only worked for one firm. Although impossible to determine with the data gathered, these figures point to the suspicion that wives

and mothers reached the apparel manufacturing labor force when extra-money was needed in the household. Especially to provide for their children education. This would had important effects for their personal identities. They entered into paid labor as an extra-obligation with their households and because they loved their children. Hence, the symbolic meaning of wage labor for them was essentially a contribution to the family well-being derived basically from the desire to give their children "... the best they could..."

In the rest of this Chapter I will analyze the major changes that occurred in these women's lives.

Working Wives and Mothers Six Years After

Home-based Workers

Of the original sample of 127 outworkers, only 22 were interviewed in 1991-92 and all were classified again as wives and mothers. The most important information to trace these women's major life changes is shown on Table No. 40. In 1985-86 the 22 home-based wives and mothers re-interviewed were predominantly living in nuclear arrangements, only 3 (13.6%) were extended. The same proportion between nuclear and extended domestic groups was found in 1991-92. In both periods whenever two complete family units were sharing the same house it was the worker's family unit and a married son' or daughter'. Again married sons and daughters living with their families of origin were found as a means of family support for young couples. Only 2 (9.0%) were still working as domiciliary apparel assemblers. Three (13.6%) were engaged in an economic activities outside their

TABLE No. 41.
KEY VARIABLES FOR HOME-BASED WORKING
WIVES AND MOTHERS IN 1985-86, REINTERVIEWED IN 1991-92.

NUM	YEAR	AGE	WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE HH	WOMEN'S OCCUPATION	DOM GROUP	FAM UNIT
WOMEN STILL WORKING AT THE GARMENT INDUSTRY IN 1991-92						
31	1985	41	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	48	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU 1 WH	
34	1985	33	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	39	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
WOMEN ENGAGED IN AN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY OUTSIDE THEIR HOMES IN 1991-92:						
21	1985	25	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	31	WIFE & MOTHER	NURSE ISSSTE	1 CFU	CFU
30	1985	34	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	40	WIFE & MOTHER	MAID BY DAY	1 CFU	CFU
40	1985	29	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	35	WIFE & MOTHER	JANITOR	1 CFU	CFU
WOMEN ENGAGED IN AN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY INSIDE THEIR HOMES IN 1991-92:						
42	1985	38	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	44	WIFE & MOTHER	BY DAY WASHER	1 CFU	CFU
23	1985	40	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	
	1991	46	WIFE & MOTHER	PETTY STORE	1 CFU	
24	1985	30	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	2 CFU+ 1 WH	CFU
	1991	36	WIFE & MOTHER	BAKES CAKES & SELLS CLOTHES	1 CFU	CFU

TABLE No. 41 (CONTINUED...)

NUM	YEAR	AGE	WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE HH	WOMEN'S OCCUPATION	DOM. GROUP	FAM. UNIT
29	1985	23	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	29	WIFE & MOTHER	HANDICRAFTS HAMMOCKS	1 CFU	CFU
27	1985	29	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU+ 1 WH	CFU
	1991	35	WIFE & MOLTER	CROSS-STITCH	1 CFU	CFU
35	1985	34	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	40	WIFE & MOTHER	SEAMSTRESS & WASHER	1 CFU	CFU
36	1985	45	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	51	WIFE & MOTHER	INDEPENDENT SEWER & WASHER	2 CFU	CFU
38	1985	27	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	33	WIFE & MOTHER	SEAMSTRESS	1 CFU	CFU
39	1985	35	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED		
	1991	41	WIFE & MOTHER	SEAMSTRESS		
WOMEN WHO HAD BECOME FULL-TIME HOUSEWIVES IN 1991-1992:						
22	1985	32	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	38	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU	CFU
25	1985	29	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU+ 1 WH	CFU
	1991	35	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE		
26	1985	47	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU+ 1 WH	CFU
	1991	53	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU+ 1 WH	CFU+

TABLE No. 41 (CONTINUED...)

NUM	YEAR	AGE	WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE HH	WOMEN'S OCCUPATION	DOM. GROUP	FAM. UNIT
28	1985	36	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	42	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	CFU	CFU
32	1985	30	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	36	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU	CFU
33	1985	27	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	33	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU	CFU
37	1985	31	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	37	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU	CFU
41	1985	34	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	40	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU	CFU

CFU = COMPLETE FAMILY UNIT
WH = WOMEN HEADED FAMILY UNIT
+R = PLUS RELATIVES

homes (one as a nurse, 1 as maid by the day and 1 in a janitorial service company; the 3 said they changed jobs on purpose to get a better salary). Nine (41%) women were working at home but not in apparel manufacturing. Five of these women would have wanted to continue in piece-work assembly, but they were fired between 1989-90. The rest (8, 36.3%) had become full-time housewives. They wanted to, because they were not fired.

An ex-home-based worker that in 1991-92 was baking cakes told me that she would have preferred to have continued in apparel manufacturing, but work had become scarce. She was told that nothing more was going to be delivered to her house and although she had looked around, even having gone to several garment factories, she had been unable to find a new piece-job.

According to garment entrepreneurs this was due to the fact that the industry shifted from mainly sewing *guayaberas* to "casual clothes"[1] and the need for home-based labor diminished. I think that salary control made it possible to hire mainly factory workers, who are better controlled. In 1991-92 the minimum legal salaries were so low that made profitable for garment entrepreneurs to resort on factory labor.

In 1985-86 worker's households had a mean of 6.09 members, 2.68 economic contributors and 3.36 economic dependents. The dependency ratio was 1.25 and the *per capita* household income was 1.5 times the *per capita* minimum general wage. In 1991-92 the household members had diminished to 5.63 with also less economic contributors (2.54) and less economic dependents (3.1). The dependency ratio remained almost the same (1.2), but the *per capita* budget had increased to 2.4 *per capita* minimum general wages. Notwithstanding, using a non-parametric procedure to compare these means, the differences were not significant at the .05 level.

Aside for one case, in both periods all the re-interviewed women were still married to the same man. To better understand how work and life combine in a wife and mother working as a home-based worker a case study will be presented:

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[1]That is, *guayabera's* production diminished and daily wear clothes were assembled instead.

Case Study

In 1985 Doña Gladys was 38 years old and had been married to Herbert, an ironworker, for 12 years. When they got married he was 29 and she was 26. They had an 11-year-old-girl who was finishing grade school and was a very good student. Because her husband was self-employed they lacked fringe benefits. Although Doña Gladys did not know Herbert's earnings, she reported that he gave "enough" money for the family expenses; her income was used to buy the "extras." But what she called "extras" were in fact indispensable expenses for survival such as clothes, school supplies and home appliances. What he paid for were the daily meals and the household maintenance (electricity, gas, water and rent); she covered the rest.

Doña Gladys was born in the countryside (Espita), but she had lived in Merida since she was 5 years old. She started to work for a salary at 16, packing sweets for a local factory. She worked there for three years, quitting because of the low salary. At 19 a friend recommended her to the owner of a clandestine garment sweatshop. Gladys was not skilled, but she was taught how to sew with industrial machines there. Afterwards, she moved to a *guayaberas* (men's shirts) factory, working there for nine years and being legally hired since the first day. She quit this job shortly after getting married. Afterwards, she worked again for this factory another two years to save enough money to make the initial payment on their house, quitting again when her daughter was born.

Gladys became a home-based worker when her husband got seriously ill and could not work for a long period. She had continued working as a domiciliary laborer ever since. When interviewed she had been involved with the same garment factory

for 10 years. She got the job because one of her sisters-in-law worked as a formal laborer in the plant and knew that outworkers were hired.

The cut pieces were taken to her house on Mondays and she turn them in at the company on Saturdays, pay-day. If any serious mistakes were found, the materials would be returned to the worker next Saturday. Doña Gladys was proud of never having had something returned to her in the 10 years she had worked there.

She sewed all day long. Even the local butcher knew that and gave her the meat without her having to wait in line, because she had to return home and continue sewing as soon as possible. Her husband's income was not enough for the household expenses, especially since he had become ill and cirrhosis had slowed down his production rhythm. Thus, when first interviewed, Doña Gladys was working 8 or 9 hours a day. She was in charge of attaching pockets to slacks and lab coats (uniforms for the IMSS employees).

Yucatan begun sewing for the IMSS on the basis of a special agreement with the federal government to stimulate the local industry. However, the work was supposed to be done in legal enterprises; the federal government even gave advantages to the local garment entrepreneurs, such as loans to buy machinery. Finding Doña Gladys sewing lab coats at home revealed how the garment entrepreneurs used any means to augment their profits.

Doña Gladys sewed from 8 AM to 1 or 2 PM, then stopped to cook and eat, working again until 5 or 6 PM. She got really tired, feeling her back burning. If the pain was intense she had to stop sewing and scrub her back with a towel soaked in hot water to get some relief. Despite the long work day she was making only $ 14 900.00 monthly, 44.5% of the minimum legal wage. She was paid by the piece and

her earning depended on the difficulty of the task and the type of fabric. However, she could never know in advance which pieces she was going to sew next and how much she was going to be paid. Besides, she had no fringe benefits, not even occasional loans in extreme economic shortages. She liked sewing and loved to see her work perfectly done, but felt despair for the piece rates. Because of the above, she did not want her daughter to be a sewer; she preferred her to become a secretary or an accountant, especially since she was such a good student. But she was not sure of being able to pay her school expenses for many more years.

As many other wives and mothers, Doña Gladys was in charge of all household chores, despite the fact that her husband worked little because of his illness and was at home almost all the time. She used to wake up at 6 in the morning and clean and straighten the house before starting sewing. At 8 she began sewing near her front door to catch the outside light. From 10 in the morning she combined cooking with sewing, going from the kitchen to the machine. She had a refrigerator, so did not have to buy food every day. Friday was the day to wash (without a washing machine) and iron the family's clothes; she tried to do it early in the morning, before starting sewing. When necessary her husband and her daughter "helped" her buying things in the nearby stores.

She felt that her husband was not abusive; they used to talk about important decisions and decide whether they should do something or not together. However, household organization and her daughter's problems were only Doña Gladys arena and she felt proud of how she handled them. Anecdotes of the advisement she had given to her daughter or how she managed to acquired new household appliances were frequent in her conversation.

The family's house was in a government development in the south of the city. It was a small, well-built house consisting of a big front room and two small ones in the back: the kitchen and the bathroom. It had electricity and potable water, although the field where it was built was small and the street where it was located was not paved. They got it though a government agency as housing for poor people (INDECO) and they were still paying for it.

Despite all the disadvantages of home-based labor, Doña Gladys would have continued sewing at home ".. because I can't afford being unemployed and can't leave my home..." (*no puedo estar sin trabajar y no puedo dejar la casa*) but one day without any previous notice she was told that the factory was closing and she was not to be paid off. The only thing she got was a lab coat. Gladys tried to be an outworker for other factories, but she could not find a new job, especially because her sewing machine was not industrial or semi-industrial. Her daughter was participating in a *mutualista* and was thinking about giving her mother the money as a down payment on a machine. But Doña Gladys was afraid because she was conscious that "...regarding expenses they lived day by day..." (*a pesar de nuestros compromisos vivimos al día*) and could easily miss several monthly payments and lose it. Thus, she had to switch to doing laundry instead of sewing; she did mending for neighbors and friends, as well as trying to be a self-employed seamstress. However, she disliked the latter activity because people did not pay on time and this was a source of difficulties. If she asked them for the money too often in the street people got mad and stopped talking to her. This was serious because must of them were either friend or neighbors.

Desperate, Doña Gladys even tried to return to a garment factory as a regular worker. From November to January of 1990, she moved to her mother's house with her daughter Monday though Friday because the factory she was in was just around the corner. However, her husband did not enjoy this arrangement; he did not want to be left on his own.

In 1991 Doña Gladys was a washerwoman, her husband still a self-employed blacksmith and her daughter had finished high school. Guadalupe, had presented the admission exam in the *Instituto Tecnológico de Mérida* and had been admitted. But because of the cost of transportation, tuition fees and school supplies, she did not register, the family could not afford her education. Instead, she became a secretary and was working as such. She was already engaged to a mechanic and planning to marry soon.

The above information, along with Doña Glady's case illustrate various angles of these women's lives:

a) It made clear why and when women in her situation get in an out the labor force. For example, she quit her job when getting married, then got again into paid labor to buy a house, she quitted once more when her daughter was born and then reached the labor force when her husband got ill. Afterwards, she felt that she could not afford being without working.

b) Nonetheless, she considered her income to be "extra" money for the family because the food and the household bills were paid with her husband's earnings. I think that for these women it is important to feel they have a good marriage with a responsible husband and that makes them diminish they own economic merits.

c) By contrast, Guadalupe's success at school and her ability to manage to work and do household chores almost at the same time were strongly emphasized by her. She, as many other women during the interviews, considered them as her own merits and was proud of them.

d) Women's vulnerability as home-based workers was also clear in Gladdy's case. She never knew in advance her weekly earnings and she was fired from one day to the other without notice.

c) However, her struggles to find another job made clear the few opportunities these women had in the local labor market.

The situation of factory wives and mothers will now be presented.

Factory workers.

Table No. 42 summarizes the information of the 19 women re-interviewed from the original sample of 65 wives and mothers factory workers. Only 4 women remained in the apparel industry, 3 (15.8%) as plant workers and 1 (5.3%) in a home-based fashion. Three (15.8%) were seamstresses, 3 (15.8%) had opened small stores at their own homes, 1 (5.3%) was a cook's helper and 1 (5.3%) said she was looking for a job. Seven (36.8%) were full-time housewives. In 1991-92 out of 11 women in the labor force, 4 (21.0%) were working outside their homes while for 7 (36.8%) their homes were also their working places. But the majority (8, 42.1%) were out of the labor market. Clearly wives and mothers formerly working as garment factories employees were predominantly either working at home-based or full-time housewives. Neither of them reported had been fired.

TABLE No. 42.
KEY VARIABLES FOR FACTORY WORKING
WIVES AND MOTHERS INTERVIEWED IN 1985-86 AND 1991-92.

NUM	YEAR	AGE	WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE HH	WOMEN'S OCCUPATION	DOM GROUP	FAM UNIT
WOMEN STILL WORKING AT THE GARMENT INDUSTRY IN 1991-92						
197	1985	21	WIFE & MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	27	WIFE & MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
200	1985	24	WIFE & MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	30	WIFE & MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
208	1985	18	WIFE & MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	2 CFU	CFU
	1991	24	WIFE & MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU+ R	CFU
212	1985	40	WIFE & MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	2 CFU+ R	CFU
	1991	46	SEPARATED	HOME-BASED	1 CFU+ 2 WH	WH
WOMEN ENGAGED IN AN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY OUTSIDE THEIR HOMES IN 1991-92:						
199	1985	38	WIFE & MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	44	SEPARATED	COOK HELPER	1 WH	WH
WOMEN ENGAGED IN AN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY INSIDE THEIR HOMES IN 1991-92:						
195	1985	21	WIFE & MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU+ 1 WH	CFU
	1991	27	WIFE & MOTHER	SEAMSTRESS	1 CFU	CFU

TABLE No. 42 (C0NTINUED...)

NUM	YEAR	AGE	WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE HH	WOMEN'S OCCUPATION	DOM. GROUP	FAM. UNIT
198	1985	26	WIFE & MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU+ R	CFU
	1991	32	WIFE & MOTHER	SEAMSTRESS	1 CFU	CFU
201	1985	26	WIFE & MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU+ R	CFU
	1991	32	WIFE & MOTHER	SEAMSTRESS	1 CFU	CFU
206	1985	34	WIFE & MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	40	WIFE & MOTHER	PETTY TRADER	1 CFU	CFU
207	1985	21	WIFE & MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	27	WIFE & MOTHER	PETTY TRADER	1 CFU	CFU
210	1985	25	WIFE & MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	31	WIFE & MOTHER	PETTY TRADER	1 CFU	CFU
WOMEN WHO HAD BECOME FULL-TIME HOUSEWIVES IN 1991-1992:						
196	1985	34	WIFE & MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	40	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU	CFU
202	1985	42	WIFE & MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	2 CFU+ R	CFU
	1991	48	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU	CFU
203	1985	34	WIFE & MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	40	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU	CFU

TABLE No. 42 (CONTINUED...)

NUM	YEAR	AGE	WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE HH	WOMEN'S OCCUPATION	DOM. GROUP	FAM. UNIT
204	1985	49	WIFE & MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	55	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	4 CFU+ R	CFU
209	1985	23	WIFE & MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	2 CFU	CFU
	1991	29	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU	CFU
211	1985	40	WIFE & MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	46	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU	CFU
213	1985	38	WIFE & MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU+ R	CFU
	1991	44	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU+ 2 WH	CFU

CFU = COMPLETE FAMILY UNIT
WH = WOMEN HEADED FAMILY UNIT
+R = PLUS RELATIVES

Women's primarily identity as housewives was made clear by these figures. They also reinforce the conclusion that women included in the sample worked for a wage when their households faced economic constraints or to meet specific goals (such as given their children education). Thus, the re-interviewed married women were mostly temporary workers.

While in the first interviews all the women worked outside their homes, six years later only a fifth of them were still in an outside job. Besides, half of the original sample had left the labor force. So if it is economically possible, women dedicate

themselves to housekeeping and child caring. Only two women had divorced; the rest remained married to the same man. One of the divorced woman said she switched to home-based labor to take proper care of her family, despite the fact that at the moment of the second interview she was living with a single son, a married son and his wife, a divorced sister and her children. The other divorced woman was a cook in an "economic kitchen" and was the main economic provider of her domestic group.

In 1985-86 wives and mothers working as factory laborers had an average of 6.38 household members, 2.36 economic contributors and 4.18 economic dependents. Their dependency ratio was 1.70 and their *per capita* income represented 1.20 times the *per capita* minimum general wage. By 1991-92 the equivalent figures were 5.66 household members, 2.61 economic contributors and 3.05 economic dependents. Maybe due to a slightly decrease on the dependency ratio (1.16), their economic situation had improved to 2.1 *per capita* minimum general wages (Table No. 24).

In 1985-86 14 (73.6%) husbands were their households' main economic providers, in addition to a father (5.3%) and a father-in-law (5.3%) (3 cases were missing). In 1991-92 the two (10.5%) workers that had become household heads were their household principal contributors, 14 husbands (73.7%) and a son (5.3%) (2 cases were missing). At the moment of the first interview 16 (84.2%), a mother (5.3%) and a women with her husband (5.3%) handled the household budget (a case was missing). By the second interview the domestic group administrators were 13 (68.4%) women, a daughter (5.3%), a woman with her husband (5.3%) and a woman with her mother (5.3%) (2 cases were missing).

In 1985-86 11 (57.9%) reported giving all their salaries to the household budget, 1 (5.3%) between 81 and 90%, 2 (10.5%) between 71 and 80%, 1 (5.3%)

between 41 and 50%, 1 between 31 and 40% and 1 (5.3%) less than 10%. In 1991-92 of the 11 women still in the labor force, 8 (72.7%) said they gave all their income for household expenses, 1 (9.0%) between 41 and 50%, 1 (9.0%) between 31 and 40% and 1 (9.0%) less than 10%.

To better understand how these figures are built in a real life, a case study is presented next.

Case Study

Deisy was born in the countryside (Tekax) but had lived in Merida since she was 11. In 1985 she was 21 years old and had been married since she was 18 to Hugo, 29, who had finished grade school and worked as a glazier at a local glass store. They had a 2-year-old daughter (Carolina) who stayed with Hugo's mother while Deisy went to the factory.

Deisy lived in a house which consisted of a large well- built room with a roof made out of metal sheets. The street where the house was located was unpaved. The house had potable water and electricity. It also had a bathroom and a kitchen. She lacked a refrigerator and washer, but did not really need them because they ate out and her daughter ate at Deisy's mother-in-law place.

When Deisy was 14, a friend took her to the sweatshop where she was working. Deisy was not skilled, but there she learned how to use industrial machines. Because her salary was low, when she saw a newspaper ad offering a better salary for the same job, she went to that factory and got the job. She worked there for 8 years. Since then she had never stopped working for various factories.

When interviewed Deisy was an employee of a medium-sized factory, mostly manufacturing men's shirts (*guayaberas*), although it also produced children's and women's clothing. She was an "assembler". The work day was from 8 in the morning to 5:30 in the afternoon, with half an hour off for lunch. She was legally hired and had fringe benefits; her salary was by piece and she was earning between $ 8 000.00 to 10 000.00 a week, depending on the sewing chores she was assigned to do (around 1.1 times the minimum legal salary). All her money and her husband's were for household expenses. Because she sewed so many hours, she sometimes had pain in her back and her legs; she also suffered from headaches. She did not consider herself well-paid so she preferred her daughter to study and be able to do something else.

After working, Deisy went to her mother-in-law's house nearby to pick up her daughter and return home. At that time (6:30 in the afternoon) she started doing household chores. However, she declared that her husband "... helped me in everything..." they made all the important decisions regarding their house and household dynamics together. She was the one that handled every day expenses (*el gasto*) and had never faced problems with her husband because of her job in the factory. She was happy with her life and the only thing she would have wanted to change was "... to have fewer economic constraints..."

In 1991, she had quit working at the factory because she had four children, three girls (ages 8, 5 and 1) and a boy (3). Nevertheless, she sold for "The Füller Brush Company" and was a "Tupper Ware" promoter, getting around $ 300 000.00 monthly, 87.8% of the minimum legal salary; all this money was for the household budget. Through "Füller," she and her children were enrolled in medical

care. Her husband was working as an aluminum worker[2]; she did not know his salary but received $ 510 000.00 a month from him. However, she was disenchanted with her marriage; her husband was drinking heavily and had become a womanizer. She said she would like to divorce him, but not only had he told her he was not going to allow her to leave him, she also realized that with four small children to raise she needed his economic help "at least."

Deisy continued managing the budget: the food was paid with his contribution and the electricity, water, clothes and the monthly payments to CORETT[3] were covered from her earnings. Her mother, brothers and sisters sometimes took care of her children while she was selling or collecting from her clients. They also bought garments and shoes for them and once in a while took them to the movies or the zoo. She had hens and turkeys, and not very long ago when she was in need of extra money to pay CORETT she sold a pig. When she faced extreme economic constraints she killed a hen to eat; she also used the eggs to feed her children.

She felt that she had became the household head not only because she was in charge of everything in the house without her husband's involvement, but Hugo's "vices" caused him not to give enough money for the family expenses. "He is drinking and spending on women my children's food ..." (*se toma y gasta con mujeres la comida de mis hijos*) she sadly said.

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[2]In Merida aluminum is used on windows, mosquito nets, doors and so on because it does not rust as other metals do; the region is warm and humid. Aluminum workers (*aluminieros*) are the ones who manufacture and install the above devices.

[3]*Comisión Reguladora del Territorio* (the government office that legalizes the *ejidal* land that is used for housing).

This case study points several important facts commonly present in the lives of married women with children:

a) The importance of other female relatives' help while women worked outside their homes. In Daisy's case her mother-in-law looked after her grandchildren almost all day long.

b) Regardless other women's help, working wives and mothers had a long workday. Every day after returning from the factories they had to do at least some domestic chores. During the weekend it was time for the laundry or the house cleaning.

c) Despite pooling feminine efforts, when women had various young children the need for them to stay at home becomes crucial and they quitted their jobs. If the need for extra-money is strong, they engaged in activities they can do at home.

d) Husband's alcoholism was a major problem for several of the interviewed women. Not only men spent a high proportion of their salaries in drinking, alcohol often made them aggressive with their wives and children. Sometimes even open violence arose. However, women did not divorced them; especially of they had children they needed their husbands' economic support. However, arguing about drinking was a source of permanent conflict in many marriages.

In synthesis: Most of former wives and mothers engaged in wage labor in the first interview had switched either to an economic activity that could be done in their homes or had become full-time housewives. Several different interlinked episodes account for this trend. At has been pointed out before, the interviews made clear that in the labor market women with the socio-demographic characteristics of these women occupy intensive, repetitive and monotonous activities which in addition are

characterized by a very low salary. Thus, their households' main economic providers remained being their husbands. Furthermore, despite collaboration from female relatives and friends, working wives and mothers faced long tiring workdays. Besides, their identity as housewives, with the obligations attached made them "responsible" of children and domestic chores. This caused them annoyance because they commonly felt that they were not taking proper care of these matters. In conjunction, these situations made them work for short periods while it was strictly necessary for their domestic groups, but as soon as ends were met or other household members reached the labor force, they returned to their "obligations" as housewives.

CHAPTER No. 9
WORKING HOUSEHOLD HEADS

General Information

The last group to be presented is that of household heads. Household heads were considered either women with no spouse and co-resident single offspring (widowed or separated women and single mothers) or women who were their household's main economic providers. In 1985-86 the ratio between the 53 women classified as household heads was 3:1 (40:13) for factory and home-based laborers, respectively. On the other hand, while household heads represented less than 10% (8.5%) of all the home-based workers, they were a fifth (22.47%) of the factory employees interviewed. The influence of the position of the women in their households in their labor options was again clear in the case of household heads. They predominated in factory labor because of their need for earning more, despite the domestic complications they sometimes faced.

There were 5 (38.5%) separated or divorced women laboring as outworkers; 6 (46.2%) widows and 2 (15.4%) married women with children that were their household's main economic providers. One of these two women had a handicapped husband because of a work-related accident. They all had offspring.

The group of factory laborers was formed by 8 (20.0%) single mothers; 15 (37.5%) separated or divorced women with children; 3 (7.5%) widows with offspring; 13 (32.5%) single women without children who were their household's main economic

providers (three of them were divorced, they did not have children but working in garment manufacturing had made them their household's main economic contributors); and a wife and mother who was also the primary provider (2.5%).

Within the household heads group there was internal labor segregation. All single mothers were working in factories. The single mothers in the sample had their family's "help" (*cuento con la ayuda de mis padres*) and they remained in their family's of origin house. However, once they became mothers it was expected that they will provide for their personal and their children's expenses. Because they counted on their mothers and other female relatives for child rearing, they could work at factories and get a better payment.

The ratio between separated women with children was 1:3 (frequencies 5:14) for home-based and factory workers, respectively. If possible, separated women returned to their families of origin and left their children for factory work. They had to provide for them because generally men did not give them money.

Widows were mostly found in home-based labor (ratio 2:1). They "preferred" working at home primarily because as middle-aged and unskilled women, with little experience in the labor force, it was hard for them to get into and face a factory working environment, but felt protected working at their homes. However, their choice made them poorer. As this research has pointed out, home-based labor was characterized by low wages and lack of fringe benefits.

The 13 daughters who were their households main economic providers had no "obligations" in their households (they were not "responsible" for housework). This allowed them to abandon their homes and get better wages. No wonder they were all factory laborers. There were 3 married women with children who were their

household's main economic contributors. Two were home-based laborers and one a factory employee.

Relevant information for household heads' domestic groups composition is summarized in Table No. 43. There were 20 family units in the 13 home-based workers' households and 64 family units in the 40 factory laborers' co-resident groups. Seventy five percent (15) of the family units in the outworkers group were headed by women, the same was true for 56.2% (36) of the factory employees. Furthermore, 50% of the household heads involved in the garment industry were living with individuals that conformed another family unit.

Female household heads working as home-based workers declared they did not go to a factory because of: housework and children (9, 69.2%); their age (2, 15.4%), the pressure at the factories to meet quotas (1, 7.7%) and, in one case, the fact that the factory forced a change to domiciliary work (1, 7.7%). Household heads were in charge of domestic chores at high rates.

Factory employees preferred going to the plant for the reasons synthesized in Table No. 44. Over half (58.6%, first four reasons in the above mentioned Table) openly declared the need for more money. All together 22.7% explicitly recognized the advantage of having fringe benefits, which are impossible to get on a home-based basis. Mother's support for their working daughters was made evident. The worker's mothers were most commonly in charge of housework. Thus, they played a very important role in making it possible for factory workers to leave their homes and seek better wages. It was also made clear that even if the workers participated in housework, other women helped them as well. Hence, women's solidarity sharing household chores was crucial for household heads.

TABLE No. 43.
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGES OF FAMILY UNITS.
(HOUSEHOLD HEADS).

FAMILY UNITS				
SINGLE FAMILY UNIT	n	%	n	%
NUCLEAR	1	7.7	3	7.5
HEADED BY A WOMAN	4	30.7	12	30.0
NUCLEAR PLUS RELATIVES			2	5.0
HEADED BY A WOMAN PLUS RELATIVES	3	23.0	3	7.5
TWO FAMILY UNITS				
COMPLETE			3	7.5
1 COMPLETE & 1 WOMAN HEADED			8	20.0
1 COMPLETE & 1 WOMAN HEADED PLUS RELATIVES			2	5.0
1 WOMAN HEADED & 1 MALE HEADED	1	7.7		
2 WOMEN HEADED	2	15.4	2	5.0
THREE FAMILY UNITS				
COMPLETE				
2 COMPLETE & 1 WOMAN HEADED	2	15.4	2	5.0
1 COMPLETE & 2 WOMEN HEADED			1	2.5
FOUR FAMILY UNITS				
2 COMPLETE & 2 WOMEN HEADED			1	2.5
WITHOUT NUCLEAR COMPONENT				
FEMALE WORKER WHO LIVES WITH HER *COMADRE* & HER *COMADRE'S* FAMILY			1	2.5
COLUMN TOTAL	13	99.9	40	100.0

These figures led to the conclusion that aside from old widows, household heads worked as home-based workers if they could not find help with household

chores and child rearing activities. Otherwise, they went to factories to get better pay and/or fringe benefits.

TABLE No. 44.
WHY WOMEN WORK AT A FACTORY.
HOUSEHOLD HEADS.

REASONS	n	%
MORE MONEY	17	32.1
FRINGE BENEFITS & BETTER PAY	10	18.9
BETTER CONCENTRATION	2	3.8
FRINGE BENEFITS & LIGHT COST	2	3.8
LACK OF OWN MACHINE	2	3.8
LACK OF INDUSTRIAL MACHINE	1	1.9
COMFORT	1	1.9
TO LEARN MORE	1	1.9
LIGHT COST	1	1.9
KNOWLEDGE OF ASSEMBLING ONLY	1	1.9
FIXED SALARY	1	1.9
MISSING INFORMATION	1	1.9
COLUMN TOTAL	53	100.0

Washing clothes seemed to be a duty that each worker was most likely to do for herself and for her children (42.5% of the workers were involved in it), perhaps because it could be done on weekends without interfering with the workday. Cooking

was also an activity that workers did in a large proportion (35%), either alone or with help. However, despite the assistance of other women, a great proportion of factory workers were involved in household chores.

The vulnerability of household heads with little support from other women or with structural conditions that did not facilitate their incorporation into factory labor was evident. Sixty nine percent (Table No. 45) of the home-based laborers

TABLE No. 45.
SIZE OF FACTORY BY TYPE OF WORKER.
HOUSEHOLD HEADS.

FACTORY SIZE	HOME-BASED	FACTORY	ROW TOTAL
LARGE	1 8.3 7.7	11 91.7 27.5	12 22.6
MEDIUM SIZED	2 8.7 15.4	21 91.3 52.5	23 43.4
SMALL	1 20.0 7.7	4 80.0 10.0	5 9.4
SWEATSHOP	5 62.5 38.5	3 80.0 10.0	8 15.1
JOBBER	2 100.0 15.4		2 3.8
CLOTHING STORE	2 66.7 15.4	1 33.3 2.5	3 5.7
COLUMN TOTAL	13 24.5	40 75.5	53 100.0

worked for sweatshops, for jobbers or for clothing stores which, as discussed in Chapter No. 3, paid the lowest salaries in the industry. By contrast 80% of the factory laborers in this group worked for large and medium-sized enterprises. Only 10% of these latter women were part of the so-called informal sector. As a consequence, more than half of the home-based workers (53.8%) were involved in another economic activity, while 22.5% of the factory workers were also doing another task to augment their income (Table No. 46). As in the precedent groups of workers discussed, being a private seamstress was the most common supplementary activity.

TABLE No. 46.
SUPPLEMENTARY ECONOMIC ACTIVITY BY TYPE OF WORKER, HOUSEHOLD HEADS.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY	HOME-BASED	FAC-TORY	ROW TOTAL
SEAMSTRESS	3 37.5 23.1	5 62.5 12.5	8 15.1
WASHING & IRONING CLOTHES	2 100.0 15.4		2 3.8
EMBROIDERING, KNITTING, HAND CRAFTING HAMMOCKS	1 20.0 7.7	4 80.0 10.0	5 9.4
GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE	1 100.0 7.7		1 1.9
COLUMN TOTAL	13 100.0	40 100.0	53 100.0

Socio-demographic Characteristics of Working Household Heads

On average, household heads working as home-based workers were 39.4 years-old (S.D.=7.8) and the ones involved in factory labor 33.2 (S.D.=8.7). Thus, factory workers were significantly younger than their home-based counterparts (P<.02). This difference was probably due to the presence of young single mothers and daughters who were their main economic providers at their households, found only in the factory workers group, and the predominance of old widows in the home-based labor group.

Household heads had little education. Among the domiciliary piece-workers 1 (8.3%) was illiterate, 9 (75.0%) were elementary school drop-outs and 2 (16.7%) had finished grade school. Of the factory employee group 87.5% had elementary school or less (3, 7.5% illiterate; 21, 52.5% grade school drop-outs and 11, 27.5% elementary school graduates, only 12.5% had more education (2, 5.0% had not finished middle school; 1, 2.5% had completed middle school; 1, 2.5% had technical studies and 1, 2.5% had attended high school). However, a value of Lambda=0 states that there was no relation between education and labor option in this group of women.

There were 4 (33.3%) home based workers from Merida, 6 (50.0%) from the countryside and 2 (16.7%) from out of the state. Twenty five (62.5%) factory workers were born in Merida, 10 (25.0%) in the countryside and 5 (12.5%) out of state.

For 9 (69.2%) of the home-based workers, apparel manufacturing was their first working experience. They started to work when, as heads of household, they needed to find an economic activity to sustain their family. One (7.7%) had worked before getting married in a *cordelería*, 1 (7.7%) had been a waitress, 1 (7.7%) had

had a small business and 1 (7.7%) had been a cook. Three quit their jobs to "give their children a proper education."

For 21 (52.5%) factory laborers, garment manufacturing was their first working experience, 6 (15.0%) had been maids, 6 (15.0%) had worked as employees in the service sector, 4 (10.0%) had been former home-based garment workers, 1 (2.5%) had worked in a *cordelería*, 1 (2.5%) had been a factory worker (other than the garment industry) and 1 (2.5%) had helped her husband who was a tailor. Nineteen (47.5%) of these women had continued working as garment workers, 6 (15.0%) quit their jobs because they did not like it, 5 (12.5%) because of marriage and children, 5 (12.5%) abandoned paid labor to study; 2 (5.0%) because they changed residence, 1 (2.5%) because of family pressures, 1 (2.5%) because the factory was far from her house and 1 (2.5%) because she had got divorced and stopped helping her husband (who was a tailor).

What were the major changes found among these women when interviewed again?

Working Household Heads Six Years After

Home-based Workers

Of the 13 originally interviewed household heads working as outlaborers, 11 were contacted again in 1991-92. Only two were still working for the garment industry at their homes, but the 11 were still engaged in waged labor, even the 3 women

TABLE No. 47.
KEY VARIABLES FOR HOME-BASED WORKING
WIVES AND MOTHERS IN 1985-86, RE-INTERVIEWED IN 1991-92.

NUM	YEAR	AGE	WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE HH	WOMEN'S OCCUPATION	DOM GROUP	FAM UNIT
WOMEN STILL WORKING AT THE GARMENT INDUSTRY IN 1991-92						
31	1985	41	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	48	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU 1 WH	
34	1985	33	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	39	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
WOMEN ENGAGED IN AN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY OUTSIDE THEIR HOMES IN 1991-92:						
21	1985	25	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	31	WIFE & MOTHER	NURSE ISSSTE	1 CFU	CFU
30	1985	34	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	40	WIFE & MOTHER	MAID BY DAY	1 CFU	CFU
40	1985	29	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	35	WIFE & MOTHER	JANITOR	1 CFU	CFU
WOMEN ENGAGED IN AN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY INSIDE THEIR HOMES IN 1991-92:						
42	1985	38	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	44	WIFE & MOTHER	BY DAY WASHER	1 CFU	CFU
23	1985	40	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	
	1991	46	WIFE & MOTHER	PETTY STORE	1 CFU	
24	1985	30	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	2 CFU+ 1 WH	CFU
	1991	36	WIFE & MOTHER	BAKES CAKES & SELLS CLOTHES	1 CFU	CFU

TABLE No. 47 (CONTINUED...)

NUM	YEAR	AGE	WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE HH	WOMEN'S OCCUPATION	DOM. GROUP	FAM. UNIT
29	1985	23	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	29	WIFE & MOTHER	HANDICRAFTS HAMMOCKS	1 CFU	CFU
27	1985	29	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU+ 1 WH	CFU
	1991	35	WIFE & MOTHER	CROSS-STITCH	1 CFU	CFU
35	1985	34	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	40	WIFE & MOTHER	SEAMSTRESS & WASHER	1 CFU	CFU
36	1985	45	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	51	WIFE & MOTHER	INDEPENDENT SEWER & WASHER	2 CFU	CFU
38	1985	27	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	33	WIFE & MOTHER	SEAMSTRESS	1 CFU	CFU
39	1985	35	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED		
	1991	41	WIFE & MOTHER	SEAMSTRESS		
WOMEN WHO HAD BECOME FULL-TIME HOUSEWIVES IN 1991-1992:						
22	1985	32	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	38	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU	CFU
25	1985	29	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU+ 1 WH	CFU
	1991	35	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE		
26	1985	47	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU+ 1 WH	CFU
	1991	53	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU+ 1 WH	CFU+

TABLE No. 47 (CONTINUED...)

NUM	YEAR	AGE	WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE HH	WOMEN'S OCCUPATION	DOM. GROUP	FAM UNIT
28	1985	36	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	42	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	CFU	CFU
32	1985	30	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	36	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU	CFU
33	1985	27	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	33	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU	CFU
37	1985	31	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	37	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU	CFU
41	1985	34	WIFE & MOTHER	HOME-BASED	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	40	WIFE & MOTHER	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU	CFU

CFU = COMPLETE FAMILY UNIT
WH = WOMEN HEADED FAMILY UNIT
+R = PLUS RELATIVES

who had married again (2 of whom were still domiciliary piece workers when the second interview took place). They said they had continued working because they were used to "having their own money" (*estoy acostumbrada a tener mi propio dinero*) and that they would not have married again without their new husband's explicit consent to continue in the labor force.

In 1985-86 there were almost as many nuclear domestic groups as there were extended ones (5 and 6, respectively). Four nuclear arrangements were women

headed, with the workers living alone with their offspring. The other one was "complete," but the worker was considered the household head because her husband was handicapped as a consequence of a labor accident (she also considered herself the household's head).

The worker's family units in the extended arrangements were also woman-headed and the worker was the household head in all of them (thus, the advantage of making a methodological difference between co-resident group and family units was proved again. This would not have been detected with conventional methods). In 5 of the 6 extended domestic groups the worker's mother was sharing the house with her (in 2 of these the father was also present, in 2 the mother and her offspring -thus, she was also the head of her family unit- and in the last a widowed mother). In a co-resident group a worker's married son was sharing the house with his mother and his single brothers and sisters. In one, there was a worker's married brother and his family unit and in another extended household the extension was due to the presence of an uncle and the worker's two younger brothers.

Thus, young couples living with their families of origin were found also among household head's domestic groups. Again it was clear that they could count on their families of origin to help them face the typical economic constraints of these initial stages.

In 1985-86 9 female workers (81.8%) and 2 sons (18.2%) were their households' main economic providers. Ten workers (90.9%) and a mother (9.1%) handled the budget. All the household heads were giving their entire income to the household budget. In average, there were 6.63 household members, 2.36 economic contributors and 4.18 economic dependents. The dependency ratio was 1.7. Home-

based households heads were one of the poorest groups, with 1.2 *per capita* minimum legal wages (below them were just home-based daughters with .6).

By 1991-92 the main economic providers of the interviewed women's households were: the *propositus* (4, 36.4%), the husband (2, 18.2%), a son (2, 18.2%), a daughter (2, 18.2%) and a son-in-law (1, 9.1%). The collective expenses were handled by the *propositus* (10, 90.9%) and by a mother (1, 9.1%). Eight of these women were still giving all their income to the household. In average these household had less members than before (5.36), more economic contributors (3) and less economic dependents (2.36). The dependency ratio was low (0.8) and the *per capita* minimum legal wage was of 2.7. In fact six years after these households were the ones better off economically.

To illustrate how these households "nuclearized" and "extended" in different stages of the family cycle, a case study is described.

Case Study

In the first interview Doña Argelia was 42 years old and a recent widow. Her husband, who had been a gardener, had died just two months before. He had been diabetic and alcoholic, so it was not unusual for him to die at the age of 47. Martin, her 19 year-old son, was a very good student finishing high school, and hoped to become a chemist. Her mother was very proud of him because he was also a responsible person and a collaborative son who worked on holidays to pay for his own school supplies. Addy, her 16-year-old daughter, was studying to become a seamstress, and her younger sons, Marco Antonio (14) and Jorge Alberto (11), were in grade school. They all were very close; she proudly stated that it was because she

had supervised her children's development closely, never ignoring them ("*nunca los descuidé*").

Doña Argelia had started to embroider as a home-worker when she got married "to help her husband with the family expenses." At first he did not want her to work, but he finally accepted because he was aware that his income was not sufficient to sustain the family and the job could be done at home while she continued looking after the house. Once this first tension has passed he never again complained about her for working for a wage. Later on, she combined child rearing with home-based embroidering without any conflicts.

When first interviewed, Doña Argelia, who was born and raised in Merida, had been an outworker for twenty years. Her godmother, of Maya origin and from the countryside, had taught her how to embroider using a sewing machine when she was 13. She had started to embroider for pay at 22 when a women she knew introduced her to an intermediary. For two years she embroidered "typical" clothing for the owner of a sweatshop; then she changed to various formal enterprises with better pay. Eleven years after she started embroidering, she decided to switch from a non-electric sewing machine to a semi-industrial one (Singer 20u), not only to speed up her work and get more money for it, but also to do the task with less effort. She got credit from a local store to buy the machine and she worked harder for a while to pay it.

Although she admitted that she was exhausted sometimes, she continued on that job when her children were born because, on one hand, she considered it an ideal way to cope with household chores and child rearing activities, and, on the other, she wanted to give them "everything in her power" (*les quería dar todo lo que estuviera a mi alcance*). As a widow she was glad she had never quit working

because "now, although poor, at least I have a means of survival" (*ahora aunque pobre, tengo conqué vivir*).

When first interviewed she was working five hours a day at the machine. Besides, she was in charge of all household chores, although her daughter helped her with the house-cleaning. When asked about the distribution of domestic chores, she proudly said she did everything, even made the family hammocks. As many other wives and mothers, Doña Argelia was proud of having been able to simultaneously look after her children, her house and work for a wage for many years. Without question, that feeling of having been able to be a kind of a "super-woman" was a source of pride, especially because she felt successful raising her children, thus "every effort made, had paid off" (*todos mis esfuerzos han sido recompenzados*).

As an embroiderer, she had been involved with the same firm for seven years. An intermediary took her the work, picked it up and paid her at home on Mondays. Besides, no pre-settled quotas were required, she did as many pieces as she could, combining this task with her household obligations and economic needs. She was embroidering men's shirts (*guayaberas*). She was paid by piece ($100.00 each) and she was able to sew 12 pieces a day. Thus, her earnings were about $ 1 200.00 daily, $ 6 000.00 a week because she also worked on Saturdays (71.74% of the minimum legal wage). As fringe benefits she got Christmas bonuses and occasional loans.

As many other houses in the suburban setting, hers consisted of a large main room built in the middle of a medium-sized field. In the back, attached to this room and communicated with it, was a smaller one used as kitchen and dining room. The rooms had concrete floors and walls, but the roof was made of metal sheets.

Because of Merida's hot weather, this material made the house very warm for many months in a year. Well-trimmed plants and grass, formerly cared for by her husband, decorated the front yard of the house. In the backyard there were fruit trees (sour and sweat oranges and lemons) and *chaya*, a local bush used as vegetable. This backyard was also used as bathroom since the house did not have one; there was also a well for water since no potable water was available. The large room had several hammocks where people sat during the day and slept at night. In a corner there were a small table and two chairs. The family had electricity, a gas stove, a stereo and a blender, but no refrigerator; therefore, Doña Argelia bought fruits and vegetables and cooked every day since she could not save food from one day to another, especially in Yucatan's hot weather. The door was located in the middle of the front wall. This was the place where Doña Argelia sewed in order to catch the light better.

She liked her job, and she thought sewing was important for women as a means to get "decent money" if necessary. Because of this, she convinced her daughter to get involved in it more professionally. However, she was aware that despite her efforts, her earnings were not enough for the family's everyday expenses because of her unfairly low salary. She was in the process of figuring out what to do about it because she had become the sole household economic provider.

When re-interviewed in 1991, Doña Argelia was no longer involved in home-based labor. Three years before the work had become extremely scarce and the wages were lower than ever, so she sold her machine and started washing and ironing clothes. Two weeks before this final interview she was making an average of

$ 280 000.00 monthly with this job (79% of the minimum legal wage),[1] enough for her own expenses, especially because her two older sons and her daughter contributed to her household budget even though they had gotten married and did not live with her anymore.

During the second interview Doña Argelia was living with her younger son, who was 17-years-old and a full-time tourism student in a private school, Marlene, her daughter- in-law, and Javier, her grandson. Martin, her older son, had quit school shortly after the first interview because, despite her efforts, he had to start working to help her with household expenses. In 1991, he worked in Cancun as a salesperson in a large snack company and made good money. He gave his mother $ 400 000.00 monthly, especially to make it possible for his "little" brother to continue studying, become a professional and reach the goals he had not been able to due to his father's death. There was a lot of family cooperation so one will succeed.

Marlene and Javier were living in Merida with Doña Argelia for two reasons: a) because Cancun's weather made Javier sick: he got a rash all over his body; and b) Marlene needed to work for money. They wanted to buy a house and they needed somebody to look after their child during her working hours. They did not know anybody trustworthy enough in Cancun to take care of Javier, so Doña Argelia had been taking care of her grandson while her daughter-in-law had begun working at a drugstore as a salesperson two weeks before the second interview. Doña Argelia bought the groceries, cooked and cleaned the house; her daughter-in-law washed her clothes and her baby's. Marlene was earning the minimum wage ($ 354 000.00) however, and since Doña Argelia, had quit washing and ironing to take care of Javier,

[1]Minimum legal salary = $ 354 000.000 monthly.

Marlene was giving her $ 200 000.00 of her salary to pay her. Because she was not paying rent and her husband sent her money for their expenses, she was able to save $ 154 000.00 a month for the house.

In 1991 Addy, Dona Argelia's daughter, was married and was also living in Cancun. She had a daughter and was pregnant again. When Addy's daughter was a year old Doña Argelia brought her to Merida for an entire year. This action was carried out to give Addy the chance to work, save, and make the first down payment on their own house. Doña Argelia could not live with Addy and her family in Cancun because she still had to "look after my youngest son" (*tengo que atender a mi hijo*). However, Doña Argelia was willing to go to Cancun after the birth of her new grandson to help her daughter. If necessary, she was willing to take Javier with her. Addy paid her younger brother's school expenses, such as monthly fees, books and school supplies.

Marco Antonio was a driver in a large Mexican bus company. He also had finished high school and contributed economically to his mother's expenses on a regular basis. Doña Argelia was convinced her sons had such good jobs because they had finished high school. She was well aware that her contributions to the household budget had played a very important role in this. Since Marco was settled in Merida with his wife, whenever he was not traveling he went to visit her to check if she and his brother were well.

Doña Argelia economically "helped" her parents and visited them every Saturday. Her father used to have an ice delivery route but when he felt too old he gave it to Doña Argelia's little sister's husband. So, from Doña Argelia's point of view, her sister and brother-in-law had the obligation to feed them and to take care of them.

Nevertheless, because she had no economic shortages, thanks to her two sons and her daughter, she gave them money for their personal expenses once in a while. She sometimes cleaned their house or cooked for them.

Doña Argelia thought without question that a woman's place was in her home, taking care of her children. She said that a woman should work for a wage only if it was necessary for everyday survival and the good care of her children could be guaranteed. As was repeatedly said, she was also convinced that "no one can take care of children better than their own mother" (*nadie cuida a los hijos mejor que su madre*) In 1991 she still considered herself a household head because "my older son lives in Cancun" (*yo soy la jefa porque mi hijo mayor vive en Cancún*).

Doña Argelia's case illustrates various important points:

a) Women's pride for being able to handle their houses and raised their children "properly" despite the efforts this implied.

b) Female worker's joining and dropping from the labor force throughout their lives, according to their families economic needs.

c) Family solidarity and the crucial role it plays. In Doña Argelia's case she had provided child care to her daughters and sons whenever had been needed. Her offspring had given her economic support. Because of this support she was in the position of "helping" her own parents.

d) Again, the advantage and the possibility of sharing the house with the family of origin in critical situations was made evident. By living with Doña Argelia her daughter in law was saving monthly and was receiving child care at the same time.

In summary: Home-based households heads are so far the only group that was found entirely in the Economically Active Population in the second field work.

Five of them had even switched from working inside their homes to better non home-based paid employments. For 2 women this was possible because their children had grown up and did not need constant attention. Three of these ex-home-based workers lived in extended households. The 2 women that were married explicitly said that they were not willing to quit their jobs.

Hence, adversity gave household heads the sense of having been able to handle a household by their own for many years. Probably this situation made them build a new identity. They were proud of their families and themselves. The 2 re-married women stated that they demanded their husbands to remain in the labor force. In a way these 2 women "renegotiated" their marital contract. The Caribbean has been reported as a place were women have gained a new position within their households. At the same time it is a region characterized by an abundance of female heads of households (Safa, 1990 and forthcoming). The findings among Yucatecan women proportionate elements to construct the hypothesis that these two conditions might be related. Nonetheless, new research is needed to test it.

Factory Workers

Table No. 48 summarizes relevant information about the factory workers interviewed twice. Twenty one of the 40 garment factory employees first interviewed were re-contacted (52.5%). Of the 21, 76.1% (16) were still waged workers in 1991-92. Eleven remained in the garment industry as factory laborers (including a separated women that remarried). Two worked said that they had switched to a more profitable activity: one was a shop employee and the other a maid. The 3 married women still part of the EAP in 1991-92 explicitly said that "before the marriage (I)

made sure my husband will not ask me to stop working" (*antes de casarme me aseguré que me iba a dejar seguir trabajando*). Four were seamstresses (one of these women was a daughter main economic provider that had married). Four were full-time housewives (two of them were married) and 1 daughter considered main economic provider in the first interview said she was unemployed in the second interview.

Factory households heads had the most diverse extended households in 1985-86. In 1991-92 more than half (57.1%) remained extended. In 1985-86 in these women's domestic groups 15 (71.4%) workers were their households' main economic contributors; the same status was held by 5 fathers (23.8%) and a brother-in-law (4.7%). Seven (33.3%) workers and 14 mothers (66.7%) managed the household budget. The importance of the worker's mothers was made evident in the working household heads lives, they were supportive and heavily involved in domestic chores.

Seventeen (81.0%) factory household heads were giving all their income for the family budget. One (4.8%) between 71 and 80%, 1 between 61 and 70%, 1 between 41 and 50% and 1 between 31 and 40%. These domestic groups had in average 6.09 members, 2.19 economic contributors and 3.61 economic dependents. Their dependency ratio was 1.6 and they had 1.7 the *per capita* minimum legal wage.

In 1991-92, 8 (40.0%) interviewed women remained as main economic contributors, 5 (25.0%) husbands, 2 (10.0%) daughters, 1 (5.0%) father, 1 (5.0%) nephew and 3 (15.0%) sons (a case was missing). Thirteen (61.9%) women were handling the family budget, 6 (28.6%) mothers, 1 (4.8%) couple, 1 women and her sister (4.8%). Fifteen (75.0%) women were giving all their income for household expenses, 2 (10.0%) between 81 and 90%, 1 between 51 and 60%, 1 between 41 and

TABLE No. 48.
KEY VARIABLES FOR FACTORY WORKING
HOUSEHOLD HEADS INTERVIEWED IN 1985-86 AND 1991-92.

NUM	YEAR	AGE	WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE HH	WOMEN'S OCCUPATION	DOM GROUP	FAM UNIT
WOMEN STILL WORKING AT THE GARMENT INDUSTRY IN 1991-92						
171	1985	32	MAIN ECONOMIC PROVIDER	FACTORY WORKER	1 WH+ R	WH
	1991	38	MAIN ECONOMIC PROVIDER	FACTORY WORKER	1 WH+ R	WH
173	1985	42	SEPARATED	FACTORY WORKER	1 WH	WH
	1991	48	SEPARATED	FACTORY WORKER	1 WH	WH
174	1985	36	MAIN ECONOMIC PROVIDER	FACTORY WORKER	2 CFU+ 1 WH	WH
	1991	42	MAIN ECONOMIC PROVIDER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU+ 2 WH	WH
175	1985	23	SINGLE MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU+ 1 WH	WH
	1991	29	SINGLE MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU+ 1 WH	WH
177	1985	35	MAIN ECONOMIC PROVIDER	FACTORY WORKER	1 WH	WH
	1991	41	MAIN ECONOMIC PROVIDER	FACTORY WORKER	1 WH	WH
178	1985	35	SEPARATED	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU+ 1 WH+R	WH
	1991	41	SEPARATED	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU+ 1 WH+R	WH

TABLE No. 48 (CONTINUED...)

NUM	YEAR	AGE	WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE HH	WOMEN'S POSITION	DOM GROUP	FAM. UNIT
179	1985	30	SEPARATED	FACTORY WORKER	1 WH	WH
	1991	36	MARRIED	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	WH
183	1985	41	SEPARATED	FACTORY WORKER	1 WH	WH
	1991	47	SEPARATED	FACTORY WORKER	1 WH	WH
186	1985	40	WIDOW	FACTORY WORKER	1 WH	WH
	1991	46	WIDOW	FACTORY WORKER	1 WH	WH
189	1985	36	SINGLE MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU+ 1 WH+R	WH
	1991	42	SINGLE MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	2 WH	WH
WOMEN ENGAGED IN AN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY OUTSIDE THEIR HOMES IN 1991-92:						
153	1985	28	SINGLE MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU+ 1 WH	WH
	1991	34	MARRIED	SHOP EMPLOYEE	1 CFU+ R	CFU
180	1985	25	SEPARATED	FACTORY WORKER	1 WH+ R	WH
	1991	31	SEPARATED	MAID BY DAY	1 WH	WH

TABLE No. 48 (CONTINUED...)

NUM	YEAR	AGE	WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE HH	WOMEN'S OCCUPATION	DOM. GROUP	FAM. UNIT
WOMEN ENGAGED IN AN ECONOMIC ACTIVITY INSIDE THEIR HOMES IN 1991-92:						
181	1985	40	SEPARATED	FACTORY WORKER	1 WH	WH
	1991	46	SEPARATED	SEAMSTRESS	1 CFU+ 1 WH	WH
184	1985	38	SEPARATED	FACTORY WORKER	CFU+ 1 WH	WH
	1991	44	SEPARATED	SEAMSTRESS	1 CFU+ 1 WH	WH
185	1985	24	SEPARATED	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU+ 3 WH	WH
	1991	44	SEPARATED	SEAMSTRESS & SODA SELLER	1 WH	WH
187	1985	23	MAIN ECONOMIC PROVIDER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU	CFU
	1991	29	WIFE & MOTHER	SEAMSTRESS	1 CFU	CFU
WOMEN WHO HAD BECOME FULL-TIME HOUSEWIVES IN 1991-1992:						
172	1985	34	SEPARATED	FACTORY WORKER	1 WH+ R	WH
	1991	40	MARRIED	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU	CFU
176	1985	23	SINGLE MOTHER	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU+ 1 WH	WH
	1991	29	MARRIED	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU	CFU
182	1985	38	SEPARATED	FACTORY WORKER	1 WH	WH
	1991	44	SEPARATED	HOUSEWIFE	1 CFU+ 1 WH	WH

TABLE No. 48 (CONTINUED...)

NUM	YEAR	AGE	WOMEN'S POSITION IN THE HH	WOMEN'S OCCUPATION	DOM GROUP	FAM UNIT
188	1985	40	WIDOW	FACTORY WORKER	1 CFU+ 2 WH	WH
	1991	46	WIDOW	HOUSEWIFE	2 WH	WH
205	1985	41	MAIN ECONOMIC PROVIDER	FACTORY WORKER	1 MH	MH
	1991	47	DAUGHTER	UNEMPLOYED	1 CFU+ 1 MH	MH

CFU = COMPLETE FAMILY UNIT
WH = WOMEN HEADED FAMILY UNIT
MH = MALE HEADED
+R = PLUS RELATIVES

50% and 1 between 31 and 40%. In average households were smaller (4.8 members), with 2.09 economic contributors and 2.8 economic dependents. The dependency ratio was 1.3 and the *per capita* minimum legal wage had augmented to 2.4. Before drawing some conclusions with this information, a case study is presented:

Case Study

Doña Lucrecia was a 42-year-old woman, separated from her husband, when first interviewed. She was born in Chunkanan in the countryside and still clearly recalled these old times when she had only two *hipiles* to wear and little food to eat. Sometimes her family could only wait for her uncle to bring home whatever animal he could shoot out in the field. If he was not successful, her mother would prepare two

raw eggs with oil, peppers and salt that everybody would eat by soaking *tortillas* in it. Her family was particularly poor because her mother was a widow. When Lucrecia was 11, this situation pushed her to live with her godmother in Merida. In exchange for housing and food she did all her godmother's household chores. Thus, while still a child, she became an unpaid maid.

Her first paid job was also as a maid. She was 17 years old by then. Later, she sold door-to-door for a local business, became a waitress in various restaurants and finally became a cook helper. At 20, when she married Hermenegildo, then 22 and an employee at a gas station, she stopped working for a salary. But when things started to go really bad in her marriage because of her husband's serious drinking problems, she had to start working. By then she had three kids to look after. She found a job as a cook at a regional food restaurant, but she soon quit because things got worse; her husband was even using her salary to buy alcohol. Later on her husband got fired, precisely for being an alcoholic and she again started working as a maid by day. A woman from Maní who was her neighbor saw her everyday problems and taught her to embroider with a semi-industrial machine (Singer 20u) in the afternoons. When skilled, a friend recommended her at a small sweatshop. From that point on Doña Lucrecia was able to work for a salary because one of her sisters was living with her and looked after the children. She started working in factories when she was 30. At the moment of the interview she had been embroidering in garment factories for 12 years.

During the first interview, Doña Lucrecia had been separated for two years and was living with her four sons and two daughters. When her former husband got fired, some friends who were iron workers invited him to work with them. He worked as an

iron worker for the rest of his life. When the interview took place he was already retired (with a monthly stipend from the government) and sometimes self-employed in the same task.

In 1985 Jorge, Doña Lucrecia's older son, was 21 years old and studying medicine. On his last vacation, he worked at a book store; every time he was not attending school he looked for a job to help his mother pay for his school supplies. He was in Medical School because he also received money from his godmother and in exchange he volunteered to clean her house. Lizbeth was 20 years old and already a secretary; she had several jobs as such: in a clinic, in a book store and in a clothing store as a cashier. She gave her mother a little money ($ 4 000.00) but financed all her personal expenses. Doña Lucrecia did not know her daughter's salary. Violeta, 18-years-old, was in middle school and wanted to be a qualified seamstress. Osvaldo was 15; he had finished grade school and did not want to continue studying. He worked in a car paint shop; his mother did not know his salary either. He did not contribute to the household budget, but paid his personal expenses. Elmer was 12 and finishing grade school, and Erik was 7 and in second grade in elementary school. Doña Lucrecia did most of the household chores, aided with the house cleaning by her daughters who cooked by turns because Doña Lucrecia did not have time to do it.

Before the separated, Hermenegildo used to be a big problem for Doña Lucrecia because when drunk he was aggressive and for a long period he drank almost every day. Sometimes when her husband arrived home drunk, the whole family had to go into the backyard or with a neighbor to spend the night because he started to pick on them. Doña Lucrecia recalled he even went after his children,

menacing them with a *machete* while ordering them not to cry. However, he was especially mean to Doña Lucrecia, even beating her. She remembered a day when he tortured her with electric shocks. Even sober he was intolerant with her. For instance, after Elmer was born, she got a machine from a factory and started to work as a home-based worker so she could care for the baby, but her husband demanded her full attention and bothered her by turning off the lights in the entire house or breaking the sewing needles.

However, despite all these stories Lucrecia remembered so well, she never asked him to leave: "I was too afraid of him" (*yo acabé por tenerle miedo*). But when her older son was old enough to confront his father, he asked him to leave. It happened a day when Hermenegildo was about to beat Doña Lucrecia. She has lived a better life since then, "as if a heavy weight was taken from me" (*como si me hubieran quitado un peso de encima*). Nevertheless, when interviewed, she was still married to the man because she knew that asking him for a divorce would only lead to more trouble. When drunk he continued to go to her house and behave aggressively, throwing stones and shouting outside. However, Doña Lucrecia realized that he was a more responsible father than others because he gave her $ 3 000.00 or $ 4 000.00 a month for their expenses.

In 1985, Doña Lucrecia was employed in a medium-sized factory manufacturing men's shirts (*guayaberas*). Her work day started at 8:30 in the morning. She could not be late because she would not be allowed to enter the building and her salary would be docked. At 10 in the morning she had a 10-minute break. From 12:30 to 1:00 she had time for lunch and at 6:30 the work day ended. Inside the factory there were supervisors who closely followed the workers. She was

paid by the piece: she got $ 28.70 for each *guayabera* and on a normal day she embroidered 40. Thus, she got an average monthly income of $ 26 000.00 (77.7% of the minimum legal wage). She had all the fringe benefits that the law establishes: medical care, Christmas bonuses and holidays. Lucrecia sometimes felt pain in her back and at the bottom of her abdomen and had lost her formerly good eyesight. She was well aware that all this was due to the fact she had "bad luck" and had not married a "good man" (*tuve mala suerte porque no me casé con un buen hombre*). For periods she even got home and embroidered sets of flowers on pieces of black velvet (*paños*) for typical shoes manufactured for tourism that were sold in Merida's main market.

However, she was satisfied because she had reached her goal of giving her children a better life than the one she had had. She also felt proud when Javier greeted her on Father's day saying that for him she was a mother and a father "in those moments my life of hard work is more than compensated" (*en esos momentos me siento recompensada por todo lo que he trabajado*).

In 1991 she was still a factory embroiderer, but besides feeling sick was bored "of years and years of doing the same thing" (*ya estoy fastidiada de hacer tantos años lo mismo*). For seconds her sight went black, a problem that was interfering with her job, causing her to make mistakes. She went to the *Seguro Social* (the government medical service for workers) and the ophthalmologist told her that her eyes were in good condition; thus the problem might be in the brain. She was in the process of going to a neurologist to find out what was wrong.

By the second interview Jorge was already a physician specializing in surgery; he was married and his wife was pregnant. Doña Lucrecia was excited about the idea

of becoming a grandmother. Just a year before Jorge rebuilt her house almost entirely; it was now a pretty place with polarized windows, closets, an inclined roof, a kitchen, dining room, etc. Of course Doña Lucrecia was delighted with it, and more than proud of her son and her house. Lizbeth was working as a dental technician and Violeta was a nurse's aide; the two of them contributed to the household budget, cleaned the house and did the dishes. Both were single and, according to Lucrecia, afraid of getting married. They did not want to live the "calvary" their mother had gone through.

Osvaldo was engaged and planned to get married in December. He also worked as dental technician; he did not contribute to the household expenses because he had crashed his older brother's car, and was paying him the repair costs. Elmer was in high school; he was a good cook to the point that he was required to prepare snacks (*botanas*) for parties.

The laundry was done by a hired woman; the cooking and the groceries by Doña Lucrecia, who also washed and ironed her own clothes over the weekends. Other household chores were done by her daughters.

Among her sons only Osvaldo drank. Doña Lucrecia was sure it was because he suffered the most. Her husband was extremely jealous and always told him that he was not his son. He had gone after him because of it, even trying to beat him from the time he was 3 years old. The child learned to seek help in an aunt's house, but he could never fully recover. This fact and her sickness were Doña Lucrecia's only sources of emotional discomfort.

Doña Lucrecia's story pointed out important issues of these women's lives:

a) Again, their entry and dropping out from the labor force at different periods of their lives was made evident. Usually, they became full-time housewives when married, but they get again into paid work when the husband's salary is not enough for family expenses. In this sense paid work is an extension of their domestic responsibilities.

b) The strong solidarity among women was also present. Doña Lucrecia learned to sew because a neighbor taught her realizing that she needed extra-money and her sister lived with her so she could go to work outside her home.

c) For these women a hard-working life is "compensated" with responsible sons and daughters that cared for them. This made them feel "proud" not only of their sons and daughters, also of themselves.

d) Alcoholism was again present as a means of permanent conflict which led into her separation. Lucrecia's daughters were afraid to get married because of that. This is easy to explain, drinking was a major problem in these neighborhoods and men started early, as young as 13 or 14-year-old. Young girls realized that by marrying one of these guys, their chances of having the same problem are high.

Final comments: By the second interviews, factory household heads were the second group with the highest percentage of women still in the labor force. Obviously, a great proportion of them had to continue working for a wage. However, two married women in this group also conditioned their marriage to their permanence in the labor force. The only four women in all the 105 former apparel laborers that had this position were ex-household heads. This reinforces the hypothesis raised before: female household heads not only get aware of their own capabilities as daily

life organizers and providers, they also know about the risk of relying only on men's earnings. Two of the remarried women were former widows, one had been separated and the other was a single mother. For different reasons all of them saw men's support disappear and did not want to feel vulnerable again.

CHAPTER No. 10
CONCLUSIONS

Women's Diversities

Without question, labor segregation was present in the local garment industry involving different sectors of women. Among the variables that differentiated the female Economically Active Population in this economic branch, the position of the workers in their households was the most important one (of course, closely related to their age and their marital status).

A clear segregation into either factory or home-based labor was present in three of the five categories used to classify women ("daughters," "wives and mothers" and "household heads"). "Daughters" and "household heads" predominated in factory labor while "wives and mothers" were primarily engaged in home-based labor. Only "wives" were not unquestionably segregated to either type of job, but their participation in the labor force, along with that of "sisters," was not significant in the garment industry.

These data reinforce the need to stop assuming working women as a homogeneous group. In this sense, the information gathered in this project coincide with other researches: it is necessary to study "women" in a much broader perspective to deal theoretically with the diverse statuses and social situations they confront. This perspective has as a main goal to recover women's changing lives and

work experiences throughout their life span, because it views them as dynamic processes (Collier and Rosaldo, 1981; Ortner and Whitehead, 1981; Lamphere *et al.*, 1993)).

Furthermore, because of the accepted social division of labor, the major events that happen in the co-resident groups (birth of siblings, other women in the household entering into the labor force, marriage, having children, etc.) impact women's lives more than men's and should not be neglected when analyzing working women (Feijoó and Jelín, 1984; Hareven, 1978; Lamphere *et al.*, 1993:5; Ojeda, 1990). Hence, it is urgent to capture the diversities between women themselves and recuperate the broad scope of their self-identities, ethnic origins (Fenández-Kelly),[1] class identification, civil statuses, ages, etc.

There is also a need to stop dichotomizing either the family or the work place in women's issues. Women live only one life where their experiences combine and create specific identities that overlap and change throughout their existence (Lamphere *et al.*, 1993:5). Besides, dealing with domestic groups rather than women in isolation bring their relations to males and other close females into perspective.

Household, Identities and Internal Hierarchies

Household and Kinship

This project highlighted that kinship systems still have a very important role in guiding the lives of the women interviewed. The rules of parentage not only taught

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[1]For sure, Mayan identity or lack of it was important for the working women included in the sample. However, this variable was not a focus of the study.

them how to name their different kin (mother, father, sister, brother, cousin, etc.), with this information they jointly learned to expect and channel feelings of love and trust.

Kinship is the basis of the family and household organization and as Selby *et al.* (1990) have stated "the family" is still today a very important component of the Mexican culture. In Mexico kin solidarity is always expected and it is important in all social groups. However, it has worked almost as a strategy of survival on the popular urban and rural sectors of the country (Chant, 1994; González, 1986; Lomnitz, 1977). This remains a reality in the Merida's suburban population studied.

Domestic groups are spaces of personal relations that are lived on a daily basis (Salles, 1993). Their structure determines with whom the co-resident members of the groups will constantly interact. As this research has highlighted, three generation and other forms of extended households are quite common in Merida's sub-urban settings. Hence, grandparents, parents and children frequently share the domestic space and their life experiences. Although these arrangements sometimes create tension, they force its members to be socialized, learning to take into account and tolerate other people's needs and interests.

Through its members households dialogue constantly with their outside reality. Thus households conform a very important space of symbolic production and re-production of feminine/masculine identities (that combine with age, generation and position in the overall group).[2] These identities impose household members obligations and rights with one another and influence the place of each individual in

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[2]It is now recognized that the so called "informal education" takes place constantly. This education is not taught at school or consciously, it is learned by simply watching what others do. Children and youth on their households are constantly exposed to hierarchies and activities performed by adults of diverse ages and sex.

the open society (Salles, 1994:140). In domestic groups, a masculine or a feminine identity is combined with the one derived from the kinship system itself and the outside experiences (for example, wage level, value of main activity carried out, "personal behavior," etc.) that jointly build internal power relations by gender and generation that are symbolized and interiorized by its members (Lamphere *et al.*, 1993:3).

For example, a mother is supposed to cherish her children, children should adore and respect their parents, a father must support economically his wife and children, and so forth. All these norms are socially constructed, but are learned when people are so young that they look as if they were the "natural" order of every society.

But in Merida a father can lose "respect" if he is unable to provide for his family, especially if he drinks or has lovers. Men's alcoholism was common and a major factor of household tension, often combined with inability to be the main breadwinner, as several of the case studies highlighted. However, if a man's salary is low but he works hard and shows "responsible" behavior (does not drink and is loyal to his wife and family), the family's respect for him is not challenged.

A woman that does not center her life around her children can also lose "respect." There are also "proper behaviors" for daughters such as "being decent" (which means not having sexual relations outside marriage) and for young men, like doing something honest for a living, do not be drinkers and not belonging to a gang. Youths, both male and female, are expected to care for their families' well-being.

Limits of the household "normative model"

"Western" households are assumed to start with a heterosexual couple not related by kinship that gets married (formation stage). The couple has various children and for many years takes care and supports them (expansion stage). Children grow up and become adults, then they start to get married and are expected to leave their parent's home (fission stage). Finally, the household is dissolved if the couple decides to separate or if one of the spouses die (dissolution stage). Of course, there are not clear cuts between one stage and the next; superposition between various of these stages are the norm (Fortes, quoted by González, 1986).

However, as the data has shown, there are multiple variants of this normative model of household formation and development, especially within poor households in Latin America. For instance, in my sample the just established couple generally lives with other relatives (commonly the parents of either spouse) for long periods, even after they have had their own children. Later on, these same spouses' married sons and daughters will live with them. Furthermore, other relatives can share the house at different moments, for instance old parents or widowed mothers and/or mothers-in-law, divorced daughters (especially if they had children), single mothers, recent migrants from the countryside, relatives facing economic constraints, etc. The couple can also separate at any stage, a situation that generally creates a women headed household which will not receive the former household male's economic support (in all the 331 households there was only one widowed man living with his single offspring).

Extended households in Yucatan seem to be not only a strategy of survival for poor households. They have a cultural Mayan origin. Robles (1991:6) has stated that the predominant household structure in the prehispanic Mayan dwellings was

extended, patrilineal and patrilocal. The prehispanic peasant extended household consisted of nuclear family units related by kin, living together and constituting the self-production economic unit. In this period, living together meant that in a big field surrounded by a fence of stones, separate typical Mayan houses were built for each married son.[3] This organization was directed to make it possible for men to work together in the field, but women also usually helped each other and shared domestic functions. Generally, the head of the cluster was the father and at his death he usually was replaced by his older son (Robles, 1991:8).

In our data, the social vulnerability of just married couples with small children and a family in expansion was evident. However, the importance of the social networks constructed via the "family" (*la familia*) to face this susceptibility was also obvious. Sharing the house with their parents, young couples saved huge amounts in rent, got help from other women to care for small children that demand constant attention; pooled expenses to buy goods such as food, water and electricity, etc. But even if living in their own places, the young couple's close kin were always there to help them out, sending them food and clothes, helping them taking care of the babies and making them fell they care for their well being. *Compadres* are also important in giving support.

In Mexico the elderly, especially if too old, ill and/or widowed, live with their offspring, sometimes even switching from one son or daughter to another from time to

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[3]It consisted of a single round big room made out of wood (*palizada*) with parallel front and rear doors. When both doors were opened the air flew cooling out the house. The roof was made out of leaves woven together (*guano*) and was separated from the structure of the house also for the air to flow. This same structure is still used in the countryside and in Merida's suburban areas, but often the walls of the house are made out of stone (*estuco*) or bricks.

time. Kin are also important when migrations into the city occur. Thus, the "normative model" based on rigid stages derived from the family life cycle rather than helping understanding household dynamics, traps the researcher in an ideal household dynamics not suitable to analyze these kind of groups and its real development. Because of the above, Oppenheimer *et al.* (1978) and Ojeda (1990) used women's life course instead. Hence, new ways to understand households are needed in the anthropological and socio-demographic research. In this work I tried to build a new model based on women's life courses and the number of family units that con be counted within each domestic group.

Superposition of Tasks and Feelings, the Rhythm of Domestic Time

The linear way of dividing time is a construction of our current modern and industrial society. We are so used to it that it is also assumed as "natural." For us a year has 365 days, 12 months, 54 weeks; a week seven days, every day 24 hours, an hour 60 minutes and so forth. It looks as if it was nature which created these divisions and we just adjust our existence to them, forgetting that there are and had been other cultures with different ways of living their time and, thus, their lives.

Especially the capitalist society has imposed production as the center of the organization of the world. It first separated the place of production (the factory) from the place of reproduction (the household) and then tied the production sphere to a rigid organization strongly based on time. In every working center there is a specific time to get in, a time to rest and have lunch and a time to get out. Furthermore, around the work day the rest of the life is now organized: waking up, having breakfast, returning home, etc.

But, although difficult to recognize, time is a social construction. The way time is organized is strongly influenced by the type of economic organization that characterizes each society, although there is not a mechanical correspondence between both spheres. Capitalist organization co-exists with other production systems and other forms of economic arrangements. Urbanization and industrialization, which introduced an extreme importance and fragmentation of time, have been imposing little by little their logic. But still today this imposition is "imperfect" and "incomplete." Furthermore, the position that each individual occupies in the economic structure influences the personal way of constructing the rhythm of their lives (Durán, 1986:13).

Today in the so called Third World the great majority of women do not belong to the Economically Active Population and even if they do so, they are reported to be trapped in a "double day." Hence, at least part of their productive capacity is mainly channelized to those small units of production of services that domestic groups are. Under these conditions their work, their affections and their personal lives are interwoven realities which lead into a particular feminine way of living time (Durán, 1986:14).

For example, through the interviews I realized that household chores are almost never done one after the other, in a linear way. Yucatecan women, as most women in the world, are trained to wake up, heat the water for the family shower, go to the kitchen and start heating the milk on the stove, place the clean dishes wherever they belong, wake up the family, return to the kitchen, pour coffee in the already hot milk, cook whatever the family is going to take at breakfast while watching their kids dressing properly, soak the dirty clothes to be washed afterwards, etc., doing almost everything at once.

Besides, if "Pepito" does not like coffee she might prepare chocolate for him, if Pedro has a soccer game after school, she would prepare a lunch for him. Thus, on the one hand superimposition of tasks is an ability women unconsciously have. But on the other hand, there is also a continuous superimposition of what is work, what is love and what makes women feel rewarded. The three arenas have no clear cuts. For instance, preparing Pedro's lunch is work, but her mother does it because she loves him. Knowing that Pedro will not be starving makes her feel good. If Pedro is a responsible student and a good soccer player, his mother will be rewarded and she will feel that her extra-efforts paid off.

Furthermore, for the interviewed women, time was by far more than a "personal" time. The events that occurred on this "extended time" had not a clear moment to happen, as in a regular workday will. Women's sense of "domestic time" has blurred limits. This female time involved a time for the husband, a time for the house and, very especially, a time for the children, woven into women's own life perception. This overlay of spheres and different people's interests nested into women's own lives make them live domestic time as an undefined future. To further complicate their every-day and life time perspectives, again, work, love and a feel of being rewarded are constantly overlapping (Durán, 1986:14). Thus,

> The double day is not only produced because of the lack of clarity on the limits of domestic production of goods and services. It is also a result of a way of living history, the life cycles, and the relationships between generations (Durán, 1986:6).

In Abreu's and Sorj's (1993:44) words:

> Despite that the process of construction of a female identity is modified from society to society and from a social group to the other, (the) female (identity) is more frequently constructed like a member of a family (mother, wive, daughter in diverse stages in the life cycle) than as a worker.

Not surprisingly, as elsewhere in Mexico (Chant, 1994:7) household chores are still a women's matter. At the most, transfer of homework and child care to other feminine kin, either co-resident or not, takes place. But the so-called "reproductive" domain remains as a primary concern of women in Merida. Domestic labor and child care generally go from mothers to daughters, or daughters to mothers, rather than sons or husbands. This same trend was reported by Chant (1994:7).

Working Women and Female Identity in Merida

A trend that Mies (1981) reported long time ago for Hindu women working as home-based lace-makers, and that she conceptualized as "housewification of labor," has been taking place in Merida. This is, housewives (essentially "wives and mothers" and "household heads") have been incorporated at high rates into the labor market but in a way that their primary identity does not change. They do not recognize themselves, nor are recognized by their household members or the overall society as full-time or partial workers. The above is particularly true for home-based workers. Furthermore, despite the fact that the number of "wives and mothers" in the garment industry factories was equal to that of "daughters," like in Brazil (Abreu and Sorj, 1990), for these women the symbolic meaning of paid work was essentially a contribution to the family well-being.

Paid labor for young single women ("daughters" and "sisters") had a different meaning. They did not have an obligation to provide a great share of their salaries to the household budget and did not have the notion of working for others' well-being. But the need of having "money for themselves" was overwhelmed by the desire to get married. The data showed that after getting married they usually dropped out of the

labor force, either as a personal choice or because young couples with small children are a vulnerable group.

However, it is import to highlight the "exceptions" that were emerging within these general trends. On the one hand, even in a traditional society like the Yucatecan, the interviewed women constantly said that "if economically necessary" women should work. Attached to women's families' well-being, "wives and mothers" are now viewed and view themselves extensively as potential workers. On the other hand, several young single women wanting to get married had consciously postponed this goal to build a career for themselves. Still this personal career was linked to their desire to give their children "a better life than the one I had" (with less economic constraints). One of the women with this life perspective was almost finished with a BA in accounting by the time of the second interview. Besides, these women along with various young single mothers were willing to marry but "not with any man"[4] They were well aware of the consequences for women and children to have a drinker or an abuser as a husband. Most importantly, they portrayed themselves as responsible persons that had gone beyond the average women in their neighborhoods and did not want "to go back because a bad marriage" (*no quisiera que todo se pierda por un mal marido*).

In Merida as elsewhere (Lamphere *et al.*, 1993:288) "daughters" were the most subordinated group within the household, as a consequence of the intra-household division of power by gender and generation. From my point of view this led to the daughter's strong desire to get married.

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[4]Various single mothers said they were aware of the importance of waiting for the "... proper man..." (*el hombre apropiado*), because they did not want to have a "... bad experience a second time..." (*no quiero tener otra mala experiencia*).

The interviewed "wives," "wives and mothers" and "household heads" generally felt that the domestic domain was "theirs." This was the arena where their talent to handle "things properly and efficiently" was made evident (the site where the interlocking between work, love and the feeling of being rewarded took place). This, along with "educating correctly their children," constituted the most important source of pride for them. Although it was true that many of the "wives" and "wives and mothers" did not know the salaries of their husbands, they were the ones that handled the household budget and/or decided almost all the domestic matters (buying clothes for the children, selecting schools for them, deciding when to get a new appliance, taking care of children and educating them their way, etc.). From these women's perspective, having their own family of procreation clearly empowered them. So it is not difficult to imagine why marriage is so important. The other alternative is continue being an obedient "daughter."

This might also explain why Meridan women living in the urban popular sectors are not "renegotiating" their marital contracts, as has been reported for married women elsewhere (Roldán, 1987; Safa, 1990), they defend the domestic domain as a "their" sphere. Cases were not uncommon like Doña Argelia's in which household control, exercised with a lot of effort, remain as a source of pride for women. The consciousness of being able to cope simultaneously with paid jobs, children needs and household chores made them feel good and proud.

Besides, women's primary identification as real or potential wives and mothers affected their perspectives of job opportunities. For example, for factory workers, being out of the house for a long work day was not compensated with a good salary and a rewarding job. This is now particularly true because of the salary control that

the national government has imposed. In this situation, staying at home to care for children and housework looked like a better female option, especially if there were other household members that could be sent into the labor force.

From my point of view the interviewed women identified themselves essentially as real or potential wives and mothers. They got involved in a paid job because they adapted their lives to economic exigencies they faced. The coping of their every day life had to be done regardless of their values about who should be taking responsibilities for what chores. This same situation was found by Fernández-Kelly (1990) and Lamphere *et al.* (1993).

Women and Home-based Labor

Home-based labor was embedded in the organization of family life. For "wives and mothers" and "household heads" their motives to take upon such tasks were clearly derived from their roles as housewives and caring mothers. However, home-based labor provided a means of economic improvement for the domestic groups of the women that were unable to abandon their houses (mainly "wives and mothers" and some "household heads") and for women that "from one day to another" had to incorporate into the labor force (as was the case of many of the widowed and separated household heads). For "daughters" home-based labor was a source of employment while continuing studying and for "wives" it was a means of making possible long-term goals of independence for the couple.

Thus, despite the low-pay and the lack of fringe benefits, re-interviewed "wives and mothers" and "households heads" complained about the shortage of this kind of labor (former workers reported that the above shortage took place around 1989-90).

Many of them would have liked to continue sewing at home and had stopped because of a change in the organization of production in the apparel industry. For women trapped in child rearing and housework, labor opportunities such as washing and ironing clothes, selling goods at their homes, preparing food, etc. are less attractive than home-based labor. This latter economic activity provided them with a better pay and a more rewarding job. Thus, despite the unfair and illegal working conditions involved in home-based labor, it was the best choice for many women. No wonder in Puerto Rico, when a sector of formal workers were fighting to forbid home-based labor because of the intense exploitation of women it involved, the home-based workers themselves were the ones that first opposed to its abolition (Baerga, 1993:112).

From my point of view two facts provoked the shortage of home-based labor in Merida: On the one hand, garment entrepreneurs switched from mainly assembling *guayaberas* to sewing basically casual clothes and, consequently, tuckers, embroiderers, and *guayaberas* assemblers were fired, both in home-based and factory labor. On the other side, wage control in Mexico (a consequence of a neoliberal structural adjustment policy mandated by the International Monetary Fund) made it profitable for the garment entrepreneurs to hire only regular factory workers, who were easier to organize and control.

The minimum legal wages paid after the policy was enforced are so low that businessmen can afford them and stopped resorting to home-based labor. An indirect proof that the above is true is that in garment factories the pay switched from being mainly based on piece-work to fixed salaries. When the minimum legal salary was high, piece-work was a means to diminish worker's wages and increase profit margins. But the current minimum legal wage is now so low that paying it has

become the way in which profit margins are increased in the garment industry.

Wage control has been making paid employment less attractive and has contributed to the expansion of self-employment. In Merida's garment industry it might also be encouraging women to drop out of the labor force, especially if some other family members can take better jobs.

Women's Identity at the Factories

Factory labor is not embedded in the organization of family life. A clear separation between the house and the work place is established with this labor force incorporation form so women construct a clear identity as workers. However, the data showed that in Merida the norm was that domestic paternalistic patterns of authoritarism were transferred to the work place. The same situation was found by Wilson (1989) in rural Jalisco.

In the factories and sweatshops that were organized almost like big families the workers were satisfied, they accepted the internal hierarchy without problems because they felt "well-treated." If they disliked the working conditions they would move into another factory without protesting. When workers were asked what would they do if they were displeased with something at the factories, they always answered that they would talk to the supervisor or the owner. None of them ever even thought about trying to organize with other workers in the factory facing the same problems nor to unionize. The large factory that was organized in a more "scientific" way provoked strong worker's discontent, still workers used to leave it without any confrontation.

However, local workers had demonstrated that when things are pushed too far away they can protest. When the first garment offshore multinational corporations were installed in 1986 and Korean instructors were hired by the *"Industria Textil Maya"* to train its workers, serious labor problems arose.[5] A cultural shock occurred. Workers were not used to work in a Fordist model, at a high speed and with a strict control over their production, competing with each other. The instructors were not even fluent in Spanish and easily got impatient with them. They could not understand where the problem was and used to blame the workers for everything. They shouted at the workers often, even in Korean. In few months a strike was organized, the Korean instructors left the country and labor organization changed in the factory.

A final note

This and many other researches had demonstrated that women's lives are built through complicated nets of interwoven processes. Besides, women and processes are changing rapidly, making both arenas and their interconnections very difficult to grasp. Still, this and many other researches are small contributions that could be contextualized in the enormous effort of understanding them.

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[5]This business sewed men's outfits. However, garment multinational corporations and national enterprises were not related to each other.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

Florencia Peña Saint Martin was the third and last child born to José Peña, a lawyer, and Emma Saint Martin, a grade school teacher. She was born on November 14, 1951, in Mexico City. On 1971 she got a bacherlor's degree on grade school education from the *Escuela Nacional de Maestros* and worked as a grade school teacher from 1970 to 1974. On November, 1974, Mauricio, her first child, was born. From 1971 to 1975 she worked towards a bacherlor's degree in physical anthropology at the *Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia* (ENAH). She was recognized as the best student Class 1975. Her BA thesis was titled "Sexual Dimorphism of the Immunoglobulin M Serum Levels," which she defended on September, 1976. On August, 1977, Ariadna, her daughter, was born. From 1979 to 1981 she worked towards a master degree in social medicine at the *Maestría en Medicina Social, Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Unidad Xochimilco* (MMS-UAM-X). Her master's thesis was defended on March, 1984, and was titled "Socio-Human Nature: Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives." She graduated with honors. Her course work towards her Ph.D. in anthropology was done at the University of Florida from 1987 to 1990. She was admitted to candidacy on February, 1990.

Since September, 1976, she has been a full-time professor and researcher at the INAH at: the ENAH's Physical Anthropology Bacherlor's Degree (1976-1982), the *Centro INAH - Yucatán* (1982-1992), the *Centro INAH - Estado de México* (1992-1994) and since February, 1994 at the ENAH's *División de Posgrado* (Graduate

School). From 1986 to 1992 she was a part-time professor at the *Facultad de Ciencias Antropológicas*-UADY and since 1992 she has been a part-time professor at the MMS-UAM-X.

Her main topics of research have been a) health in contemporary populations, b) women and domestic groups in urban settings and c) women and the informal economy, also in urban settings, about which she has published extensively.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Helen I. Safa, Chair
Professor of Anthropology

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Ivonne Audirac-Zazueta
Assistant Professor of
Urban and Regional Planning

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Allan F. Burns
Professor of Anthropology
and Latin American Studies

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Anthony R. Oliver-Smith
Professor of Anthropology
and Latin American Studies

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Marianne Schmink

Marianne C. Schmink
Professor of Latin American
Studies and Anthropology

This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of Anthropology in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

December, 1994.

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Dean, Graduate School